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Historic Environment Services

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT



**UNIT 1, BEWLAY,
SLIP END,
BALDOCK, HERTFORDSHIRE**

**Archaeological Strip, Map and
Record and Monitoring and
Recording**

**Ref: MA 493
Planning ref: 21/02818/FP**

VERSION 1.0

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MINERVA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD.

Historic Environment Services

Managing Director: Mark Sycamore, BA ACIfA

UNIT 1, BEWLAY

Royston Road, Slip End, Baldock,

Hertfordshire

Project ref: MA 493

Planning ref: 21/02818/FP

HER enquiry ref: 16/24

OASIS ref: minervaa2-530822

Archaeological

Written Scheme of Investigation for

Archaeological investigation via Strip, Map and Record

Prepared on behalf of Mr Anjit Singh

by

Mark Sycamore BA

Report No.126

December 2025

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Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Mark Sycamore. The report text and illustrations were compiled by Mark Sycamore, and was edited by Chris Turner.

Minerva Archaeology would like to express its thanks to Mr Singh and Alison Tinniswood at Hertfordshire County Council, for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Minerva Archaeology is an independent practice specialising in archaeology and the historic environment. The company undertakes a wide variety of commercial archaeological projects for clients involved in housing and industrial development, pipeline and road construction, agriculture and landscaping.

An expected condition of planning consent for the development of Unit 1, Bewlay, Slip End, Baldock, the local planning authority required archaeological mitigation work. Minerva Archaeology was commissioned to undertake this work, which consists of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording of the groundworks for the development.

No significant archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were encountered during the works. Demonstrating that the potential risk of the development impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be *Low* for all periods.

Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of Mr Anjit Singh, to cover a programme of archaeological work to be carried out as a process of investigation and in accordance of an expected compliance condition. mitigation as a condition of planning consent for the development at Unit 1, Bewlay, Royston Road, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6SF.

1.2 Slip End lies to the northeast of the town of Baldock and to the southeast of Ashwell village, centred at NGR TL 29108 387331. The site lies immediately adjacent to the A505 (Royston Road) to the north and is bordered by an existing detached bungalow and its grounds to the south, an access road to the west and industrial units to the east. The site lies between two Areas of Archaeological Significance (AAS) and a Scheduled Monument site to north of the A505 (NHLE 1003549). (Figure 1).

1.3 The present development consisted of the construction of one detached 6-bed dwelling.

Planning

1.4 The development has commenced and the current planning consent is as of yet undecided.

1.5 The advice provided by the HET at Hertfordshire County Council indicated that a programme of Strip, Map and Record and Archaeological Monitoring and Recording of the site is required (Tinniswood, 2021). A WSI (Philips 2021) was agreed but not implemented.

Scheme of Investigation

1.6 It was considered that a programme of investigation via Strip, Map and Recording (SMR) was the best approach to assess the level of impact the development has had on any archaeological remains that may have been present.

1.7 The archaeological investigation via Strip, Map and Record was conducted east of the commenced dwelling (Figure 1).

Site Background

Study Area

2.1 In order to establish the archaeological and historical context for the site, the overview set out below has been drawn under licence from the Hertfordshire *Historic Environment Record* (HER), Minerva Archaeology's own records and other sources. The study area extends to a 500m radius around the centre of the site.

Topography

2.2 The proposed development area is located in a small hamlet within the rural landscape along the roadside of the A505 dual carriageway. The site itself consists of an irregular triangular parcel of former wasteland, set within an enclosed small complex of buildings. These buildings mostly consist of small industrial units and some residential housing. The site is now occupied by the commenced dwelling.

2.3 The site lies within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 224, North Baldock Chalk Uplands. It is described as Rolling chalk landform, eroded by a complex of shallow dry valleys, surrounded by small rounded chalk knolls. The field pattern is described as large and arable with the core made up of regular rectilinear fields often with curving boundaries. The settlement pattern is described as nucleated (LCA, p. 148).

Geology

2.4 Locally the soils belong to Soilscape 3, described as 'Shallow lime rich soils over chalk for limestone' (LANDIS, 2023).

2.5 The underlying geology belongs to the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation (Undifferentiated); 'a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 90-101 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period' (BGS, 2023). At that period the local environment was dominated by warm chalk seas. No superficial deposits are recorded (ibid.).

Previous Stages of work

2.4 No previous stages of archaeological work have been carried out on this site.

Archaeological Areas (Alert, Areas of significance etc)

2.5 The proposed development lies within Area of Archaeological Significance 35 (AAS35) as defined in the North Hertfordshire District Plan. It forms a strip, approximately 1000m wide, that runs parallel to the prehistoric track known as the Icknield Way and extends northwest from the line of the A505.

2.6 AAS35 encompasses many prehistoric burial mounds, ring ditches and other enclosures, trackways, field systems and multiple linear ditches revealed from aerial photography.

Conservation Areas

2.7 None within the site or within the 500m study area.

Scheduled Monuments

2.8 The proposed development is close to the scheduled monument 'Ring ditches and enclosure at Slip End' (NHLE 1003549), approximately 60m to the west. This includes a number of ring ditches of probable Bronze Age date, five rectilinear enclosures of late Iron Age or Roman date, a probable pit alignment, trackway, multiple ditches and a Romano-British cemetery.

Listed Buildings

2.9 No listed buildings are located within the 500m study area (Heritage Gateway, 2023; Historic England, 2024).

Ancient Woodland

2.10 No Ancient Woodlands lie within the 500m study area (MAGIC, 2024).

Historic Parks and Gardens

2.11 No Registered Parks and Gardens lie within the site or within the 500m study area (MAGIC, 2024).

Battlefields

2.12 No Registered Battlefields are located within or in the immediate vicinity of the study area (MAGIC, 2024).

Significant Heritage Assets and Historic Narrative

- A high concentration of cropmarks occur at Slip End within the Scheduled Monument dating to the Bronze Age; HER 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2361, 2362, 6192 and 6755 refer to at least eight ring ditches of probable Bronze Age barrows.
- Five rectilinear enclosures (HER 2358, 2363, 7895, 7896 and 7897) are indicative of settlement activity of Late Iron Age or Roman date. A probable pit alignment (HER 7892) and probable trackway (HER 7899), multiple ditches (HER 2317, 7898, 7900, 7901, 7902, 7903), a group of pits (HER 7893) have also been identified (Ashworth, 2022).
- A Romano-British cemetery (HER 242), within a rectangular enclosure (HER 2363), was excavated by Letchworth Museum, approximately 550m to the north of the site. It revealed two graves, one containing a single burial and the other, three inhumations and a further two skulls.
- Further Romano-British inhumations were discovered in 1824 on the other side of Ashwell Road, approximately 290m to the east (HER 1321), dating to the 1st and 2nd century. In 1966 a group of 2nd century cremation were found during construction work at the same site. While laying a pipeline route across this site in 1991, 52 cremations and 10 inhumations were uncovered.
- The laying of the pipeline in 1991 led to more extensive excavations. 220m to the east of the development intensive Roman occupation was uncovered (HER 15727). Two ditches were continuations of a large enclosure (HER 2358). Further

ditches, a compacted chalk floor, possible traces of a timber structure destroyed by fire and postholes were also noted. The intensity dropped away to the west, suggesting the edge of the settlement.

- An archaeological programme of Strip, Map and Sample and Archaeological Monitoring was conducted by Minerva Archaeology at Slip End Farm, approximately 500m to the west of the site and revealed significant archaeological features dating to the Roman period (Weber-Moll 2022).
- The closest archaeological investigation to the site (70m to the east) was undertaken by Heritage Network in 2016. A total of 11 trial trenches were excavated but no archaeological finds, features or deposits were revealed (Jones 2016).
- The earliest map consulted, the Ordnance Survey map of 1887, shows the site as part of a rectangular field to the east of a singular building, named as Slip Inn Hill.
- The site remains mostly undeveloped until the mid-late 20th century.

Methodology

Introduction

3.1 All work was carried out in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Weber 2025), current health and safety legislation, and with ClfA and ALGAO guidance documents.

Fieldwork

3.2 The overburden was removed, under close supervision, to the first significant archaeological horizon or to the natural geological horizon, as appropriate, using a 5-tonne tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket.

3.3 Spoil from the machining was scanned for archaeological artefacts both visually and using a metal detector.

3.4 All identified trenches were photographed and recorded using the appropriate pro-forma. Scaled plans and sections were drawn on drafting film at scales of 1:20 and 1:50.

Post excavation

3.5 During the course of the excavations no artefacts or ecofacts were recovered. As such, no physical archive was retrieved for post excavation processing and analysis or the attention of appropriate specialists.

Archive Deposition and OASIS

3.6 The results of the present stage of work will be uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS database.

3.7 On completion of all stages of the present project, it is intended that the full archive, including the documentary records owned by Minerva Archaeology, and the material records owned by the client and held in the care of Minerva Archaeology, will be deposited with North Hertfordshire Museum Service, Hitchin.

Copyright

3.8 Minerva Archaeology shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an non-exclusive licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Brief and the Written Scheme of Investigation.

3.9 Minerva Archaeology will assign copyright on completion of the project to the museum or repository undertaking the ultimate curation of the archive, but will retain the right to be identified as the author of all project documentation and reports as defined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (Chapter IV, s.79).

Fieldwork Data

Site Stratigraphy

4.1 The observed stratigraphy was consistent across the SMR area. Consisting of a dark brown silty clay topsoil, up to 0.3m in depth, with moderate small chalk and sub rounded stone inclusions and frequent small rooting, this was over a redeposited chalk and mid brown, soft clay deposit, up to 0.2m in depth, this in turn was overlaying a natural chalk that had frequent rooting throughout.

SMR DATA

4.2 The SMR area was 15m in length and 5m in width, with a depth of up to 0.54m (Figure 2).

4.3 Towards the south eastern end of the trench was the remains of a modern post set into a concrete base.

4.4 At the north western end of the trench was the remains of a tree stump was seen, burnt out by the client prior to the works taking place. There is an existing tree line towards the south east, outside of the current site that once extended onto the site. These trees were removed prior to the commencement of the SMR works.

4.5 There was a redeposited chalk and clay layer under the topsoil that is likely the result of previous groundworks and levelling of the site associated with the construction of the house or the previous factory building on the site.

4.6 No archaeological features were observed in this area.

ARTEFACTS AND ECOFACTS

4.7 No artefacts were observed, or collected through the duration of the evaluation.

Environmental samples

No samples were taken during this stage of works.

Discussion

Aims and Objectives

5.1 The aims of the present investigation have been to open up an SMR area to assess the level of impact associated with the development on any potential surviving archaeological remains.

5.2 Considering the HET advice and the background of the site and study area, it was considered possible that this investigation had the potential to contribute to an understanding of the origins and development of Slip End, Baldock from the prehistoric period onwards, in particular:

- Activity along the route of the Icknield Way from the Prehistoric period onwards;
- Rural settlement and agricultural practices in the late Iron Age and Roman periods in the hinterland around Baldock; and,
- Mortuary practices in the Roman period in the hinterland around Baldock.

Evidence

5.3 The present part of the site had been covered by a tree line that continues beyond the site towards the south east. The presence of this tree line was seen in the SMR area indicated by the remains of a burnt out tree stump and frequent rooting throughout the natural chalk.

5.4 The SMR has demonstrated a largely uniform, simple, stratigraphic sequence across the site, comprising a topsoil, a redeposited layer above the natural chalk substrate. This suggests that the area has been previously disturbed, most likely by the modern groundworks either associated with the factory that was present on the site prior or to the more recent house construction.

5.5 No archaeological features were observed in the SMR area.

5.6 Cartographic mapping indicates that historically this site was part of an open field (1887 OS map).

Conclusion

5.7 Despite evidence for archaeological activity from the later prehistoric period onwards being identified within 500m of the study area, no significant archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were encountered during the works.

5.8 It is clear that the upper layers have been affected by modern developments of the late 20th and early 21st century. However any substantial archaeological remains would have been seen in the exposed area and were not present.

5.9 This demonstrates that the potential risk of the present development impacted remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be Low for all periods.

Confidence Rating

5.10 During the course of the fieldwork, the conditions were acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. As such the confidence rating for the work may be considered to be *High*.

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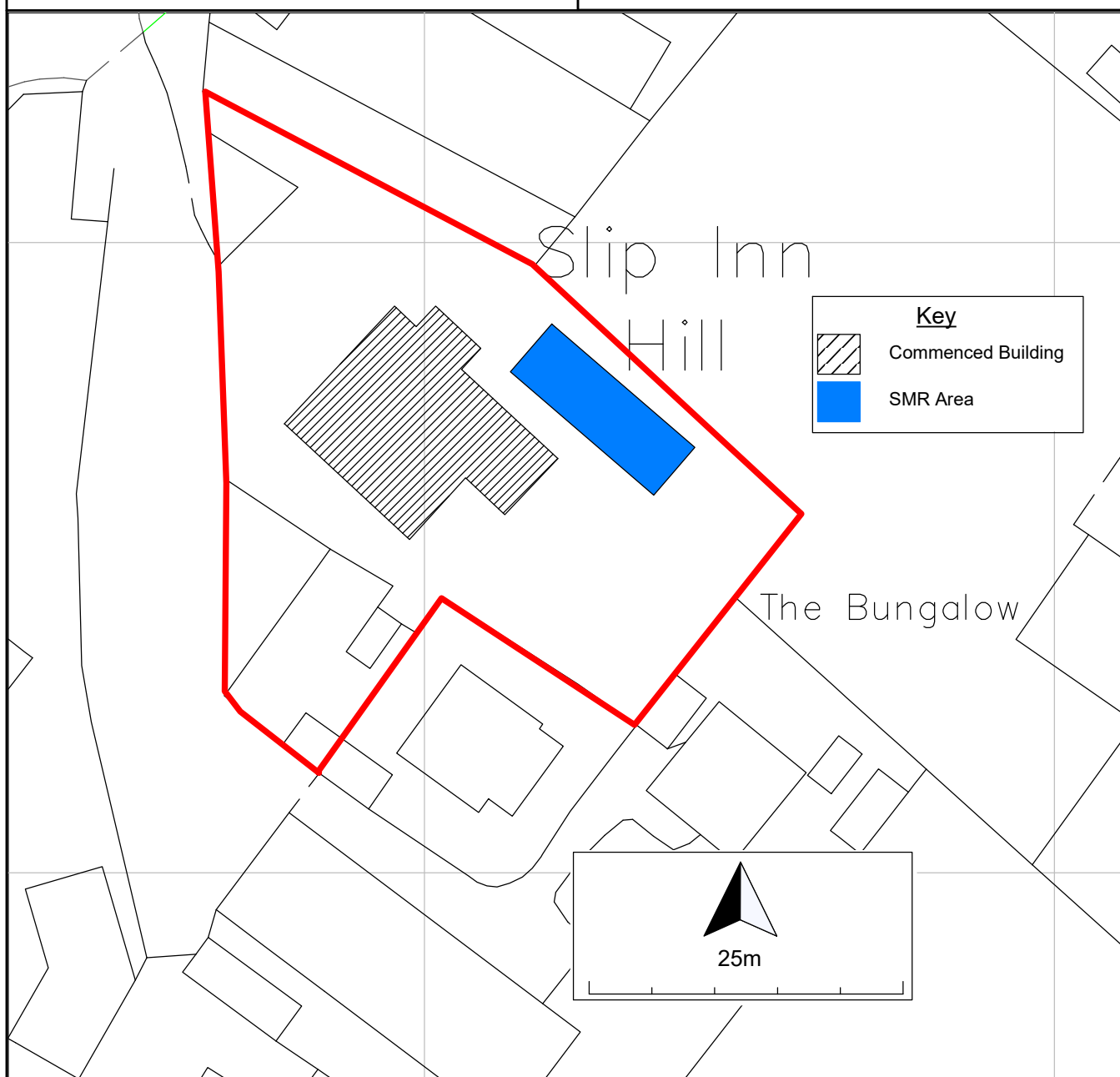
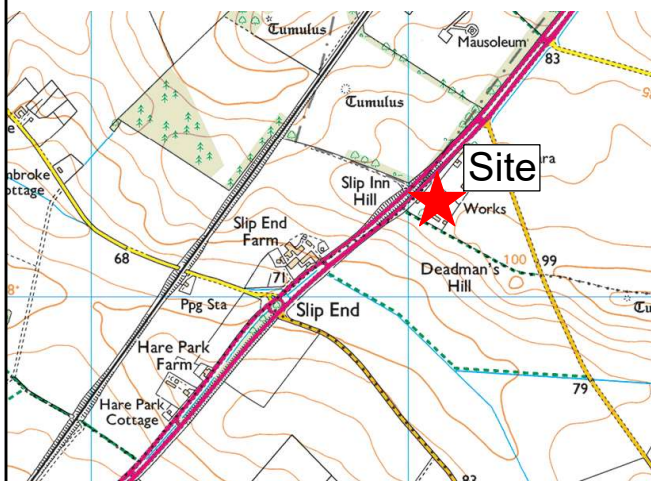
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Illustrations

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2	SMR layout
Figure 3	Indicative section

Plate 1	SMR Area – Looking South East
Plate 2	Indicative Section – Looking South West.



Site location and layout

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Scale 1:500

Figure 1

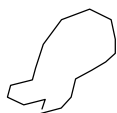


Telegraph pole and
concrete base



Indicative
section

Remains of modern
burnt out tree stump



0

5m

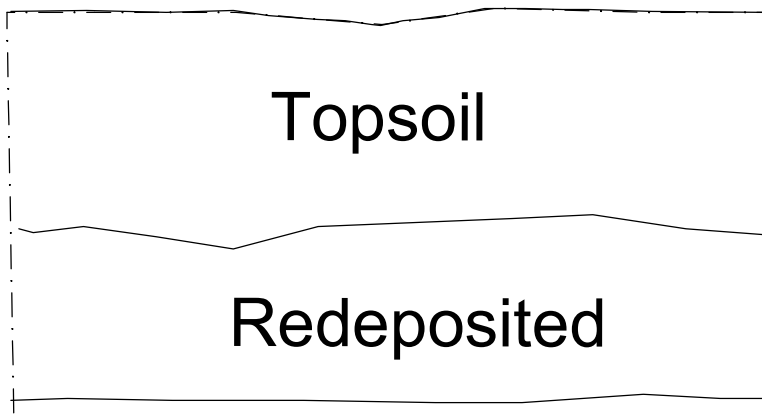
Plan of SMR area

Scale 1:75

Figure 2

SE

NW



0

1m

Plan of SMR area

Scale 1:100

Figure 2

PLATES

Plate 1: SMR Area – Looking South East



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Plate 2: Indicative Section – Looking South West.



OASIS Summary for minervaa2-530822

OASIS ID (UID)	minervaa2-530822
Project Name	Strip Map And Sample at Unit 1, Bewlay, Royston Road, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6SF
Sitename	Unit 1, Bewlay, Royston Road, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6SF
Sitecode	MA 493
Project Identifier(s)	
Activity type	Strip Map And Sample
Planning Id	21/02818/FP
Reason For Investigation	Planning requirement
Organisation Responsible for work	Minerva Archaeology
Project Dates	27-Nov-2025 - 27-Nov-2025
Location	Unit 1, Bewlay, Royston Road, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6SF NGR : TL 29097 37330 LL : 52.019377, -0.120077 12 Fig : 529097,237330
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Hertfordshire Local Authority District : North Hertfordshire Parish : Kelshall
Project Methodology	A programme of investigation via Strip, Map and Recording (SMR) was undertaken as the best approach to assess the level of impact the development has had on any archaeological remains that may have been present.
Project Results	No significant archaeological features, artefacts or deposits were encountered during the works. Demonstrating that the potential risk of the development impacting remains of archaeological significance, may be considered to be Low for all periods.
Keywords	
Funder	Private individual
HER	Hertfordshire HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	mark sycamore
HER Identifiers	
Archives	