Land to the Rear of The Walkdens, Ashwell Herts, SG7 5RU

Desk-Based Assessment



September 2013

Client: Robert Lombardelli Partnership on behalf of Origin Housing

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Summary

This report assesses the potential impacts upon the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage resource within a 0.5km Search Area around the proposed residential development to the rear of the Walkdens, Ashwell, Hertfordshire. This has been achieved by combining existing information about the Search Area with new information gathered during the course of the study. It provides an assessment of the potential construction and operational impacts upon archaeological deposits and historic monuments.

Ashwell has been a focus for settlement, burial and religious activity from the Bronze Age onwards. The Site is situated close to a number of ploughed out Bronze Age burial mounds, the closest being only 40m to the south-west of the Site boundary, and it is possible that others may be present within the Site. It is next to Ashwell Street – an ancient routeway which possibly formed part of the 'Icknield Way'. Ashwell occupies a rich Iron Age and Romano-British landscape, elements of which have been recorded in archaeological investigations immediately east and west of the Site.

Although Ashwell was was important as an Anglo-Saxon borough and later a medieval market town, the Site appears to lie outside the main focus of this settlement. It was part of a medieval open field, seemingly remaining under agricultural use until the present day. There is a possibility of post-medieval chalk pits and lime kilns being present as well as ridge and furrow and later field boundaries dating to the time of the 19th century enclosure.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Search Area but there are numerous Listed Buildings, the closest being 150m away from the Site boundary. The Site lies within an archaeological 'alert area' as identified by the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council.





1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

- 1.1.1 A pre-planning application enquiry has been submitted for a proposed residential development at land to the rear of the Walkdens, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, henceforth referred to as 'the Site'. An archaeological Desk-Based Assessment has been requested by the County Planning Archaeologist of the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council, in accordance with the requirements of National Planning Planning Policy Framework, 2012.
- 1.1.2 The 0.7 hectare Site is centred on National Grid Reference TL 27356 39711. It is located on the eastern side of the village of Ashwell, to the south of Ashwell Street and to the rear of the Walkdens a cul de sac off Station Road. The Site comprises the northern part of one large field which is currently under arable cultivation. The Site is bordered by a hedge to the north-west and the rear of houses to the north-east.
- 1.1.3 This Desk-Based Assessment will form part of the documentation submitted with the planning application. The results will enable decisions to be made by the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council with regards to mitigating the impact of the proposed development upon any heritage assets.
- 1.1.4 The proposed development is for 11 new houses and 4 flats for affordable rent, as a continuation of the Walkdens cul-de-sac that already exists.

1.2 Location, Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The Site is in North Hertfordshire District and within the civil parish of Ashwell, which is located near the border with Cambridgeshire, approximately 6km north-east of Baldock and 8.5km west of Royston.
- 1.2.2 The underlying solid geology is chalk. No superficial deposits are recorded (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html).
- 1.2.3 Ashwell parish is located along a chalk belt which is part of the Chiltern Hills and runs from the south-west of England in a north-easterly direction to East Anglia. The village is located on a scarp of this chalk belt, on a spring line where the chalk of the hills meets the impermeable clay of the lowlands. Ashwell Springs can be found 250m to the north-west of the Site, to the north of the High Street and west of Springhead where they form the source of the River Rhee.
- 1.2.4 The Site lies on a slight north-easterly facing slope, at approximately 60m OD.

1.3 Aims

The purpose of the archaeological Desk-Based Assessment is to define the character, extent and significance of known heritage assets within and close to the Site, taking into account any past impacts which may have affected the survival of any archaeology present on the Site itself. It identifies any heritage constraints on the proposed development and provides an outline assessment of any potential impacts which may result from the proposal.



1.4 Methodology

- 1.4.1 For the assessment of the potential archaeology a 0.5km radius of the Site, centred on TL 27356 39711, was studied henceforth 'the Search Area'. Sites further afield were also discussed in order to put the Site into its wider context.
- 1.4.2 The Desk-Based Assessment draws on secondary historical sources, cartographic evidence, the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), The Extensive Urban Survey for Ashwell, aerial photographs, a walkover survey and reports on previous archaeological work.
- 1.4.3 The Desk-Based Assessment has been carried out according to standards set by the Institute for Archaeologists in their guidance paper Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (2001).

1.5 Acknowledgements

- 1.5.1 The project was commissioned by Sam Jarman of Robert Lombardelli Partnership on behalf of the client Origin Homes. Isobel Thompson, of Hertfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Unit, provided the HER data and other useful information including aerial photographs. Staff at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies were very helpful in accessing historic maps.
- 1.5.2 The research and walkover survey was carried out by Kate Clover and the project was managed by James Drummond-Murray, both of OA East.



2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOURCES

2.1 The Extensive Urban Survey for Ashwell (EUS)

- 2.1.1 The Extensive Urban Survey project is part of an English Heritage supported national programme of surveys of the archaeology and historic buildings of England's smaller historic towns and cities. The EUS draws on the HER, cartographic evidence, surviving features and reports of previous fieldwork. As Ashwell had urban characteristics in the Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods it was included in the survey.
- 2.1.2 The EUS for Ashwell is, as its name indicates, extensive and it contains much of what a desk-based assessment would contain including plots of cropmarks (Thompson 2002). It is not possible to reproduce it here but it can downloaded from the Archaeology Data Service website at: http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/herts eus 2005/downloads.
- 2.1.3 The EUS data is discussed with the HER data in Section 2.2 below.

2.2 The Historic Environment Record (HER)

Introduction

- 2.2.1 The HER is the main repository of cultural heritage data for the county. On the 21st August 2013 an HER search was carried out of the proposed development area and a 0.5km radius around it. The records include monuments, findspots, historic buildings and any archaeologically sensitive areas. The HER is not a record of all surviving elements of the historic environment and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown.
- 2.2.2 Within the Search Area, the HER records 32 monuments, findspots and buildings, 12 events, 16 Listed Buildings and 10 aerial photographs of cropmarks. Each record has an HER number which is referred to in the text in bold and also on Fig 2. A complete list of all HER data can be found in Table 1 in Appendix A.
- 2.2.3 The Site lies within Archaeology Alert Area 31 as defined by the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. This is deemed by the district council to be an area of high archaeological potential and encompasses most the centre of Ashwell village and the fields to the south of Ashwell Street. This is not a statutory designation but a planning tool to help decide development proposals.
- 2.2.4 There are no Listed Buildings within the Site. The majority of the Listed Buildings are located to the north-west of the Site along Lucas Lane, Springhead and the High Street. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the Site or within the Search Area.

Neolithic c 3500- c 2000 BC and Bronze Age c 2000- c 700 BC

2.2.5 Ashwell parish has been settled, apparently densely, since the Neolithic. Around the village, there is a great deal of evidence for burial on the higher ground in the form of cropmarks of ploughed-out Neolithic long barrows and a plethora of late Neolithic/Bronze Age round barrows. The long barrows are placed where they would be visible against the skyline from below. Most of the ring ditches are in similar positions, clustering near three of the earlier long barrows and sometimes in 'cemeteries' (Thompson 2002, 2). One possible long barrow lies within the Search Area to the south-west of the Site (**2360**) and shows as a very clearly defined oval cropmark on aerial photographs.



- 2.2.6 There are seven ring ditches within the Search Area, all south of Ashwell Street and showing on aerial photographs as cropmarks (2469, 2468, 2424, 4717, 6113, 7687, 7911). These are likely to be burial barrows of probable late Neolithic or earlier Bronze Age date. The two closest to the Site are 2468 and 2469, with ring ditch 2469 only 40m from the western boundary of the Site. An aerial photograph showing these cropmarks has been reproduced here as Plate 3. The EUS casts some doubt on whether all the cropmarks attributed to being long barrows and round barrows are genuine (Thompson, 2002, 2) and further discussion of this cropmark and potential further cropmarks can be found in Section 2.5.
- 2.2.7 A large group of prehistoric and later finds found in the garden of 'The Steppes' near Ashwell Springs includes 258 Neolithic and Bronze Age flints (**6979**). These finds may be placed deposits, suggesting that the springs were a special place of possible religious significance for several centuries.
- 2.2.8 An archaeological evaluation carried out at Station Road in 2001, on what was to become the Walkdens, revealed the terminal ends of two parallel ditches (**11397**). Although of Roman date they contained residual worked flint flakes of probable Neolithic or early Bronze Age date.
- 2.2.9 Although outside the Search Area, there is some speculation that the Icknield Way may have been used as a routeway from as far back as the Neolithic period (see Section 2.2.14).

Iron Age c 700BC to AD 43

- 2.2.10 An archaeological evaluation carried out at Station Road in 2001 revealed the terminal ends of two parallel ditches containing late Iron Age to 2nd century AD pottery and a small amount of animal bone (**11397**). This is the only Iron Age evidence from within the Search Area, however close by there are historic monuments and cropmarks of this date which are worth including as they may have an impact on the Site.
- 2.2.11 Arbury Banks Iron Age hillfort is located 1.5km to the south-west of the Site (Fig. 5) Although now largely removed by agriculture, it would have dominated the skyline from the early Iron Age to the middle Iron Age (*c* 700-100BC). Medium sized univallate Iron Age hill forts such as Arbury Banks are generally thought to have been built as stock enclosures, redistribution centres, places of refuge or permanent settlements (Forde-Johnston 1976,51). Excavations in the mid 19th century showed evidence of occupation with the banks of the hillfort and also for lynchets and cropmarks outside it. Some of the cropmarks to the south-east of the Site and outside the Search Area, of pit alignments and enclosures, are likely to be contemporary with the hillfort. Arbury Banks may have functioned as a 'special place' for the wider population of the time, a centre of the territorial unit in the eastern Chilterns (Thompson, 2002, 3).
- 2.2.12 By the mid 1st century BC the focus of this territory had shifted from Arbury to Baldock, where a settlement with religious as well as domestic functions grew up (Thompson, 2002, 4).
- 2.2.13 Through this organised landscape ran the Icknield Way, located approximately 2.5km to the south-east of Ashwell. This ancient long-distance routeway ran along a chalk ridge stretching from Wessex as far as Norfolk or Suffolk (May, 1982, 1). In this area the A505 from Letchworth to Royston roughly follows its course (Fig 1). The Icknield Way once formed part of the boundary between Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, running through Royston where it crosses Ermine Street Roman road.



2.2.14 The lcknield Way is believed to have been associated with trade, exchange and long distance communication (Wright 1971, 12) and may have been used for the movement of cattle, sheep or other livestock as well as people and goods. It is thought to be prehistoric in origin although there is much discussion regarding its date, exact route and indeed whether it would ever have been known by a single name or was even a single track (Harrison 2003). In Ashwell, the broadly parallel routes of Ashwell Street and High Street less than 2km to the north of the lcknield Way may have been used as seasonal alternatives (Fig. 1; Taylor 1997). A further discussion of the ancient routeway Ashwell Street can be found in section 2.7.2.

Roman AD 43-410

- 2.2.15 Ashwell did not develop into a Roman town; the nearest small town to Ashwell in this period being Baldock. Cropmark evidence shows that it was in this period a well-organised rural area (Thompson, 2002, 4). However, until systematic fieldwork is carried out there remain unanswered questions as to how this area developed.
- 2.2.16 0.75km Roman to the north of the Site is the site of а villa (http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results). 1km north-east of the Site, a Late Iron Age and Romano-British cemetery has been excavated in a chalk pit at Morden (Enalish Heritage Pastcape No. 365913. Guilden http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway). Both sites are in Cambridgeshire.
- 2.2.17 Finds of Roman coins and pottery around the Ashwell Springs (2973, 6979 and 4848) and towards the confluence of streams north of Ashwell End have been recorded on the HER but they provide an incomplete picture and the nature of activity here is obscure (Thompson 2002, 4). Outside the Search Area many other Roman coins have been found in Ashwell and Ashwell End, some of which formed part of hoards.
- 2.2.18 The Site is located to the south of Ashwell Street which is marked on old OS maps as a Roman Road and sometimes called 'Ashwell Street Way' (**4692**). The road is ancient and, as mentioned in Section 2.2.14 it might have been used as a seasonal alternative to the Icknield Way in the Iron Age. In *Roman roads in the south-east Midlands* it is listed as road number 230 running from TL2790 4000 to TL2815 4017 and is noted as being 'of long standing but of obscure origin' (Viatores, 1964, 489). Nothing Roman has been recorded from the Site itself but its location alongside a possible Roman or earlier routeway makes it a likely location for settlement or possibly burial.
- 2.2.19 An archaeological evaluation carried out nextdoor to the Site at Station Road in 2001 revealed the terminal ends of two parallel ditches (**11397**, **EHT 4956**). They contained late Iron Age to 2nd century AD pottery, a small amount of animal bone and one oyster shell. All the finds were small and abraded and were interpreted as being rubbish from occupation nearby. There were also five undated pits (Ashworth, 2001 and 2008). Another Roman ditch and an undated pit was recorded at 22 Lucas Lane Ashwell, during an archaeological evaluation and later monitoring (Greg, 2011a and 2011b;**17600, EHT 7012** and **7013**).
- 2.2.20 The site of the 'Senuna Hoard' is located 1.5km to the north-west of the Site at Bluegates Farm, Ashwell End, to the south of the River Rhee. This was a major discovery made by a metal detectorist in 2002 comprising a hoard of 3rd to 4th century gold and silver objects, including votive leaves decorated with the image of a goddess, a silver figurine of a similar goddess and a gold brooch with a central intaglio of a lion. Several of the plaques have inscriptions that show they were dedicated to a previously unknown goddess named Senuna who may have been a water goddess local to the region. Limited excavations on the site revealed a chalk surface surrounding a hollow



which was full of earlier Roman objects dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries. Hearths and debris around the hollow are thought to be evidence of ritual feasting. The late Roman goddess plaques and jewellery are thought to have been a special deposit, possibly originally dedicated in a temple (**11726**). Although well outside the Search Area this find serves to demonstrate the importance of the area that was to become 'Ashwell', and sheds some light perhaps on the the Roman finds near Ashwell Springs. To quote the EUS 'the possibility of a religious focus centred on the springs needs to be considered' (Thompson 2002, 5).

Anglo-Saxon AD 410-1066

- 2.2.21 An inhumation burial was found in the field to the south-west of the Site (**456**) and was seen by a representative from Ashwell Museum. This appears be an isolated burial and the date is unknown as there were no accompanying grave goods. The NGR is not precise, but the HER puts it 300m to the south-west of the Site and very close to the cropmark of a small rectangular enclosure (**2319**). The HER tentatively dates the burial as possibly Anglo-Saxon; buried before the practice of inhumation within church graveyards. The burial was not within or near a ring ditch and therefore seems unlikely to be Bronze Age, although this possibility cannot be ruled out.
- 2.2.22 The nearest known Anglo-Saxon inhumation burials are from outside the Search Area at the Shire Bank; Slip End and at Odsey all located at the edges of the parish.
- 2.2.23 The rectangular enclosure (2319) shows up as an extremely well defined cropmark with angular corners and measuring c 25m x 16m. It is visible on certain aerial photographs which were viewed at the HER but could not be copied as part of this assessment (see Section 2.5.2). No internal features and no entrance are visible and it remains undated. Although the enclosure is in a prominent position on the edge of the rising ground overlooking Ashwell Street and the spring, it is unclear whether it is associated with the burial 456 or indeed if it is ancient at all. Historic maps do not show any former buildings where the cropmark is located (Section 2.4).
- 2.2.24 The EUS gives an account of Ashwell's later Anglo-Saxon archaeology. In 1086 Ashwell was described as a borough a planned town with rights given to its burgesses, and intended as a place of trade. It was not a Norman foundation, and is usually assigned to the 9th century. Those boroughs established in the 9th and 10th centuries often had a defensive as well as a trading function, but there is no sign of any defences at Ashwell. The town is more likely to have been founded after the Danish attacks, in the later 10th or early 11th century. It would have been laid out by the owner of the existing Saxon estate for purposes of trade. The advantages of the location must have appeared greater than they do now. The source of the river Rhee was one obvious factor as was the road system.
- 2.2.25 It is possible that the curving boundaries of Mill Street and the rectory grounds represent the original Saxon estate centre of Ashwell Bury, with a timber hall where the rectory stands now, and a timber church, the watermill, and the springs adjacent. This is at the east end of the High Street. At the other end of the High Street the 'west manor', Westbury, also has Saxon origins and has yielded Saxo-Norman pottery. Both of these estates are likely to be earlier in date than the borough. The planned town consists of the slightly rambling High Street running from one estate to the other, with an open market area at the western corner of Mill Street. The properties along the High Street consisted of a line of sizeable tofts. Back Street provided rear access to the properties on the south side. Many of these tofts are larger than the usual narrow burgage plot seen in medieval towns (Thompson, 2002, 5).



- 2.2.26 Anglo-Saxon and medieval pottery, including a good deal of Saxo-Norman pottery was found in the garden of 'The Steppes', near Ashwell Springs (**6979**) and this area is shown as near the site of Late Saxon or medieval farmstead in the EUS (Thompson, 2002, fig 6).
- 2.2.27 The Site appears to be just outside the borough centre and therefore it is unclear what the usage of the land at this period was.

Medieval AD 1066- c 1500

- 2.2.28 A summary of Ashwell in the middle ages and its surviving medieval elements can be found in the EUS and will only be summarised here. In 1086 the borough of Ashwell was a thriving market town. Following the laying out of Baldock in the 1140s and the foundation of its market, the road from Baldock to Royston became the preferred line of the Icknield Way and Ashwell was bypassed. In 1300 Ashwell's market was still flourishing, but the other market towns gradually overtook it (Thompson, 2002, 7).
- 2.2.29 Ashwell was a nucleated village surrounded by two open fields, to the south and north. There are also a number of hamlets or 'ends' within the parish which had their origins in Late Saxon or medieval times. There is no evidence for medieval archaeology within the Site itself and the EUS shows this area as part of a medieval open field, to the rear of tofts backing onto Ashwell Street (Thompson 2002, fig 6).
- 2.2.30 To the south of the Site and outside the Search Area are several rabbit warrens or 'pillow mounds', the nearest being 0.7km south-west of the Site.

Post-Medieval c 1500 to c 1900

- 2.2.31 At Ashwell Springs and outcropping elsewhere in the parish is a band of hard chalk Totternhoe Stone which can be used for building. Chalk from the pits was also converted into lime to use to fertilise the fields. A chalk pit and lime kiln can be seen to the south of Ashwell Street on old maps (11359). Others are recorded on the HER outside the Search Area and there is a further chalk pit that was recorded during archaeological investigations at Station Road, on the site that was to become the Walkdens (11397). All these quarries line Ashwell Street.
- 2.2.32 A cropmark of a former postmill is recorded on the HER south of Ashwell Street (**4457**) and seems to be in a different place to the one showing on the OS 1st Edition map of 1877 (Figure 7). These are located on rising ground to the south-west of the Site.
- 2.2.33 Other HER records for this period within the Search Area consist of buildings, some dating as far back as the 15th century, and mainly concentrated around the High Street, Lucas Lane and Springhead.

2.3 Historical Sources

- 2.3.1 The only primary historical documentary source consulted was the Domesday Survey of 1086. Secondary historical sources consulted were *The Victoria County History of Hertfordshire Volume III* (VCH III) and *The Placenames of Hertfordshire* 1938 (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1938).
- 2.3.2 The *The Placenames of Hertfordshire* (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1938) cites Ashwell as being a descriptive placename deriving from 'Ash' and the Old English for 'well 'or 'spring'.
- 2.3.3 In the Domesday Survey, Ashwell is spelled '*Escuelle*'. It was formed of three different manors Westbury, Digswell and Ashwell. The current Site is thought to be part of the



manor of Ashwell (Ashworth, 2001, 3). The manor of Ashwell, originally part of the demesne of the Crown, was granted by Edward the Confessor in his first charter to the abbey of St. Peter, Westminster, dated December 1066. The Domesday Survey records that of the 6 hides at which the manor of Ashwell was assessed the abbot himself held two and a half in demesne, the manor at this date being evidently a large one, with land for twelve ploughteams and meadow sufficient for six. Peter de Valognes held half a hide and Geoffrey de Mandeville 1 virgate of the abbot. There is nothing particularly worthy of note concerning this manor during the period of nearly 500 years during which it was held by the Abbots of Westminster. The abbots possessed here, as in their other manors, the privileges of free warren (VCH III, 199-209).

2.4 Cartographic Evidence

- 2.4.1 Historic Maps covering the Search Area were consulted and copied at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies on the 23rd August 2013. The maps covering the Site range in date from 1766 to 1946 and a complete list of the maps consulted can be found in the bibliography.
- 2.4.2 The study of maps and associated historical sources helps to clarify the archaeological potential of the site in two ways. Firstly, it suggests aspects of the medieval and later land-use prior to any modern development. Secondly, it pinpoints areas within the Site that may have been previously disturbed e.g. by development or quarrying.
- 2.4.3 The earliest maps for the Site are Dury and Andrew's County map of Hertfordshire dating from 1766 and Bryant's map of Hertfordshire 1820 (Figures 3 and 4). Neither are very detailed and they show the Site is being within a field with no buildings or other features nearby. Bryant's map shows two windmills south of Ashwell Street but outside the Site area.
- 2.4.4 The Tithe Map of 1841 gives more detail of the Site (Fig. 5). Enclosure of the open fields did not take place in Ashwell parish until 1863, therefore this map shows the open field to the south of Ashwell Street (Clay Bush Field) with many of its medieval strips still in existence. The Site encompasses part of four of these strips. The chalk pit south of Ashwell Street is shown (**11359**) as are the two windmills, but no features are showing within the Site itself.
- 2.4.5 The enclosure Map of 1863 shows the post-enclosure layout (Fig.6). The rationalisation of land led to major alterations -the old green lanes which had led into the fields have largely disappeared and some existing roads have been straightened. The open fields have been divided up into regular sized fields and the Site is shown as occupying two new fields adjacent to 'Bacon Hog Close'.
- 2.4.6 The OS maps from 1877, 1898 and 1924 are fairly similar to each other (Figs. 7, 8 and 9). They show some field boundary removal since 1863 and the Site now occupies part of one field. A house (Townsend House) has been built opposite the Site, to the north of Ashwell Street.
- 2.4.7 The OS map of 1937 shows development either side of Station Road, however the Site is still part of a field and is devoid of any buildings.

2.5 Aerial Photographs

2.5.1 Aerial photographs held at the HER were consulted on the 23rd August 2013. Google Earth was also consulted. In particular the two ring ditches recorded on the HER as 2469 and 2468 and located in the same field as the Site were investigated.



- 2.5.2 Nine aerial photographs were viewed at the HER. Most of these were not copyright of the HER so cannot be reproduced here. However an aerial photograph copyrighted to the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography (CUCAP) was obtained and has been included as Plate 3. This photograph shows the two ring ditch cropmarks but does not show any features within the Site itself. Other photographs viewed at the HER showed these two ring ditches plus the long barrow cropmark (**2360**), and the undated rectangular cropmark (**2319**). All the ring ditch cropmarks appear to be genuine ploughed-out barrows rather than windmill mounds or periglacial features.
- 2.5.3 One oblique photograph taken on the 1st of May 1976 showed what looked like a ring ditch in the Site itself, however this feature does not show up on any other aerial photographs viewed. The photograph could not be reproduced as it is copyright of Ashwell Field Study Centre. 1976 was a particularly hot summer and very conducive to cropmarks which may account for the cropmark's absence on other air photographs.

2.6 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

2.6.1 A Historic Landscape Characterisation project for Hertfordshire has been carried out by Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit as part of a national project with English Heritage. HLC data was provided by the HER as part of this assessment and it shows that the landscape character of the Site was for formal enclosure of open fields.

2.7 Archaeological Investigations and Surveys

- 2.7.1 Twelve archaeological investigations have been carried out within the Search Area consisting of watching briefs, evaluations and building recording surveys. These investigations are listed as 'events' on the HER and appear on Table 1 in Appendix A and also on Fig. 2. The two investigations most pertinent to the Site are an excavation and assessment at Station Road on land that was to become the Walkdens (**11397**, EHT **4956**) and an evaluation and watching brief at 22 Lucas Lane (**17600**, EHT **7012** and **7013**). At both sites Roman features were found. Reports of these investigations were examined at the HER to gather more information. At Station Road, the assessment report provides information on the depth of deposits stating that natural chalk was found within 0.5m of the modern ground surface. Elsewhere the report states that natural chalk was encountered 1.1m down and was sealed by sandy silt subsoil and sandy silt topsoil. It is presumed that this is in the area where the quarry pit had been dug through the chalk (Ashworth 2001).
- 2.7.2 Oxford Archaeology have carried out archaeological investigations at Station Quarry, Steeple Morden, which lies outside the Search Area, 3km to the south-east of the Site. A discussion of the latest phase of excavations is included in this assessment as it is relevant to the the Site and puts it in its wider archaeological context. Since 2002 OA have been conducting investigations at the chalk quarry site, the latest being an excavation in advance of the extension of the quarry, centred at NGR TL 3078 3939. This excavation investigated The 'Avenell' Way a long-serving routeway which was probably the road linking the small Roman town of Baldock to Cambridge. This routeway was found to comprise up to three successive trackways dating from the Late Iron Age or early Roman period, the latest one possibly going out of use in the Early Saxon period. The middle trackway had been worn in several places to form a large hollow way where it was wide enough for two carriages. This hollow way had formed despite evidence that the track-way had been maintained and areas of rutting repaired. The deep rutted hollow way was likely to be the reason why this trackway was



abandoned and a new one was located (Atkins and Graham, 2013, 7). The Avenell Way appears to have been added to an already established road network incorporating the Icknield Way and Ashwell Street (Atkins and Graham, 2013, 39).

2.8 Walkover Survey

- 2.8.1 A walkover survey was carried out on the 23rd August 2013 at which time the crop had just been harvested. Weather conditions were sunny and dry. The object of the walkover survey was to view on the ground any recorded heritage assets such as cropmarks, as well as any heritage assets that had so far remained unrecorded. The walkover survey also aimed to find any areas of modern disturbance that might have destroyed heritage assets. The whole of the Site was accessible via a field gate, but only the perimeter of the site was walked over. Photographs were taken (Plate 1).
- 2.8.2 Ring Ditch **2469** was visible on the ground as a raised area but no other heritage assets were visible. Ashwell Street survives as a track suitable for vehicles (Plate 2). It is banked on both sides giving it the appearance of a hollow way. This is especially apparent on its southern side where there is a difference of one or two metres in ground level between the Site and the surface of the track.
- 2.8.3 There was no evidence of modern disturbance within the Site.



3 DEPOSIT MAPPING

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In this section, an attempt has been made to map all known monuments and events and, based on this mapping, to predict the existence of further remains within the Site. It should be borne in mind that no archaeological investigations have been carried out within the Site and no development. The opportunity therefore for archaeological remains to have come to light and be recorded within the Site is slight. This may be the true reason for the scarcity of archaeological features, rather than an actual absence of archaeology.

3.2 Neolithic and Bronze Age

- 3.2.1 The Site is located near the ancient routeway, The Icknield Way, which may date back as far as Neolithic times. Ashwell Street may have been one of several trackways that formed part of the Icknield Way and, if so, may have very ancient origins. This was an important transport route from Wessex to East Anglia and would have made Ashwell, along with its sacred springs, an attractive place for settlement from the prehistoric period onwards. Flint artefacts found near Ashwell Springs attest to this. Just to the east of the Site, at Station Road, flint implements occurring residually in a pair of Roman ditches provide evidence for some kind of presence nearby in the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods.
- 3.2.2 A Bronze Age barrow cemetery lies to the south-west of the Site. There is some rather tenuous evidence, from one aerial photograph, for a round barrow within the Site itself. This cannot be confirmed without field investigation. Even discounting the presence of a round barrow on the Site, it would have been within view of and within easy walking distance of the round barrows and one long barrow and therefore the likelihood of encountering remains from this period is considered to be high.

3.3 Iron Age

3.3.1 The Site occupies a rich Iron Age landscape with evidence of settlement and burial nearby. It is adjacent to Ashwell Street which may well have been used as a routeway in this period. Ditches containing Late Iron Age pottery have been found nextdoor to the Site, at Station Road. Undated pits have been found at Station Road and Lucas Lane and it would seem of high probability that other ditches or pits of this date may be found on the Site. The possibility of burials cannot be ruled out.

3.4 Roman

3.4.1 Several factors make it highly likely that Roman remains exist on the Site: the Site's location next to a probable Roman road; the close proximity of The Springs and River Rhee which were undoubtedly sacred places in this period; the finds of Roman coins and pottery near Ashwell Springs; and Roman ditches recorded at Station Road and Lucas Lane. The character of these potential Roman remains could be field boundary ditches and droveways or enclosure ditches to Roman farmsteads. The presence of coin hoards and burials cannot be ruled out.

3.5 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

3.5.1 Anglo-Saxon and medieval activity in Ashwell is focussed to the west and north-west where the borough and later market town was located. Nothing of this date has been



found within the Site and it would seem likely that the Site was farmland in this period. Therefore the likelihood of encountering anything of this date is considered low.

3.6 Post-Medieval

3.6.1 Nothing of this date has been found within the Site and study of historic maps has demonstrated that the Site was farmland within the post-medieval period. There were no buildings or other structures on the Site from at least the early 19th century onwards. There is a possibility of earlier post-medieval chalk pits and lime kilns being present on the site that may have gone out of use before the area was mapped. However the aerial photographs do not show anything of this kind and it the likelihood is considered medium to low.



4 DEGREE OF SURVIVAL

4.1 The Effect of Ploughing

- 4.1.1 It is not known for how long the Site has been under arable cultivation but it may have been ploughed since the medieval period or earlier. Modern ploughing will have truncated the tops of archaeological features such as boundary ditches, ring ditches or pits but will not have completely destroyed them. This type of survival is evidenced by below-ground features showing as cropmarks within cultivated fields. Shallow features such as small pits and postholes may well have been completely destroyed, depending on the depth of ploughing.
- 4.1.2 Ploughing will have disturbed artefacts within the top fills of features and brought them to the surface. As a result, it is likely that below-ground features, if present, will be detected by fieldwalking the Site after harrowing.

4.2 The Effect of Quarrying

4.2.1 There is no evidence for quarrying for chalk within the Site, however if it did occur it will have had an adverse impact on any below-ground archaeological deposits. Quarrying, will not have been total over the whole Site and, if present, chalk quarries will probably occur on the Ashwell Street frontage only.

4.3 Conclusion

4.3.1 Any archaeological features within the Site are considered to be relatively well preserved. The only real factor affecting the survival of below-ground remains will be the effect of ploughing.



5 The Impact of the Development

5.1 The Proposed Development

5.1.1 The proposed development, for 11 new houses and 4 flats, will involve groundworks for footings and service trenches, as well as soil stripping for a new access road and gardens. There may also be some groundworks involved in creating a site compound for the duration of the construction and there may be disturbance from the movement of plant across the Site.

5.2 The Potential Impact to Below-Ground Deposits

- 5.2.1 The groundworks will involve considerable ground disturbance to a significant depth. Nextdoor at Station Road, the archaeological evaluation recorded natural chalk within 0.5m of the modern ground surface. Features were recorded within the evaluation trenches and also during the groundworks phase. If the conditions on the current Site are comparable, it indicates that any archaeological features will be encountered from this depth or shallower, potentially surviving directly underneath the topsoil.
- 5.2.2 Most groundworks therefore will have a direct impact on any surviving below-ground archaeological deposits.



6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 The desk-based assessment has concluded that there is the potential for below-ground archaeological deposits to survive within the Site, especially those dating from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and post-medieval periods. Most of the groundworks for the proposed scheme will have a direct impact on any surviving below-ground archaeological deposits.
- 6.1.2 The Site lies within an archaeological 'alert area' as identified by the Historic Environment Unit of Hertfordshire County Council. This is not a statutory designation but it means that any planning applications within this area are likely to require archaeological evaluation or watching brief.
- 6.1.3 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Search Area and but there are numerous Listed Buildings. These are mainly located along the High Street, Lucas Lane and Springhead and the closest Listed Building to the Site is 150m to the northwest. There will be no visual impact to the Listed Buildings from the proposed development.

APPENDIX A. HER DATA

Vonuments				
HER no.	Address	Туре	Period	
2360	Cropmark of oval enclosure, partial double-ditched curvilinear enclosure- long barrow? south of Ashwell Street	Monument	?Neolithic	
2424	Cropmark of ring ditch, probable round barrow, south of Station Road	Monument	?Bronze Age	
2468	Cropmark of ring ditch, probable round barrow, south of Ashwell Street	Monument	?Bronze Age	
2469	Cropmark of ring ditch, probable round barrow, south of Ashwell Street	Monument	?Bronze Age	
4717	Cropmark of ring ditch, probable round barrow, south of Station Road	Monument	?Bronze Age	
6113	Cropmark of ring ditch, probable round barrow, east of Ashwell Farm	Monument	?Bronze Age	
7687	Cropmark of a probable round barrow, Ashridge Farm	Monument	?Bronze Age	
7911	Cropmarks of ring ditch, probable round barrow	Monument	?Bronze Age	
 Multiperiod finds, 'The Steppes', Springhead. Prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval objects from the garden. Including 258 flints, most of which are probably of late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date; Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon and medieval pottery, including a good deal of Saxo-Norman. Clay pipes. (Went, and Colley, 1990) 		Findspot	Neolithic, Bronze Age, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval, post- medieval	
4692	Ashwell Street- possible Roman Road	Monument	?Roman	
Two Roman ditches, Station Road. The terminal ends of two parallel ditches were found during archaeological investigations (EHT 4956). A post-medieval chalk pit was also		Monument	Roman and post-medieval	
2973	Roman coins and pottery, south of High Street	Findspot	Roman	
4848	Romano-British coins, east of Ashwell Springs	Findspot	Roman	
17600	Roman ditch, undated pit, 22 Lucas Lane. Ditch contained the base of a Roman pot, and bones possibly from a horse. Found during archaeological evaluation and		Roman	
456	Inhumation burial. The date is unknown, although the apparent lack of grave goods has meant that it was thought possibly Anglo-Saxon. The NGR is not precise		?Anglo-Saxon	
12778	Possible ridge and furrow showing on aerial photographs at 22 Lucas Lane. May be lawnmower marks	Monument	?medieval	
2549	Medieval and post-medieval metalwork dating from the 13th-17th century, found with a metal detector, south of High Street. May be a bronze worker's hoard	Findspot	medieval and post-medieval	

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17702	Site of Whitby (Waller's) Farm, 35 High Street. The farm may have much earlier origins, as it is one of the farmsteads along the High Street which may have been laid out in the late Saxon period (probably in the 10th or early 11th century) as tofts in the 'borough' of Ashwell.	Building	Post-medieval with possible Anglo Saxon origins
13485	Foresters Cottages, 14-18 High Street, Timber framed Late 15th century open hall house alongside 16th century house on main street frontage		Post-medieval. 15th and 16th century
15471	Ducklake Farm, 27 Springhead. 16th century hall house. 17th century granary	Building	Post-medieval. 16th and 17th century
16572	Jessamine House, 15 High Street, timber framed farmhouse, 17th century and later	Building	Post-medieval. 17th century and later
17618	Vine Cottage, 20 High Street. Late 17th or early 18th century timber-framed house, apparently once an alehouse called the Dun Cow	Building	Post-medieval. Late 17th or early 18th century
17617	The Three Tuns, 6 High Street. An alehouse built 1803 and a timber framed barn built late 18th or early 19th century	Building	Post-medieval. 18th and 19th century
11357	Friends Meeting House, built 18th century and burnt down 1850. Quaker inhumation cemetery	Monument	Post-medieval. 18th century
15739	Anton Cottage, 29 High Street. 19th century building	Building	Post-medieval. 19th century
6330	Parish lock-up, Hodwell. Made of clunch	Building	Post-medieval, AD 1800
17701	Site of Whitby Farm, Silver Street. Post-Medieval farmstead, showing on the 1877 OS map	Monument	Post-medieval
4457	Cropmark of probable windmill mound, south of Ashwell Street. Postmill type	Monument	Post-medieval
17613	Site of village pound, north of Hodwell. Shown on 1877 OS map	Monument	Post-medieval
11359	Site of lime kilns and chalk pit on both sides of Ashwell Street, showing on historic maps	Monument	Post-medieval, 19th century
17614	Independent Chapel (Congregational/United Reformed Church), Silver Street. Built in 1851 on the site of an earlier chapel which burnt in the 1850 fire	Building	Post-medieval, 19th century
18808	War memorial, Lucas Lane. Erected in 1919	Building	Modern, 20th century
5336	Malting, Green Lane, used to house German Prisoners of War in WWI	Building	Modern, early 20th century
2319	Cropmark of rectangular enclosure, South of Ashwell Street. Unclear whether it belonged to the burial 456	Monument	Undated

<enter title using properties under 'file'>

Listed Buildings				
HER no.	Address	Grade		
DHT6839	Village lock-up in garden of 20 Hodwell	II		
DHT6841	34 Lucas Lane	11		
DHT6847	Sring cottage, 2 Springhead	II		
DHT6848	Ducklake, Springhhead	*		
DHT6873	Barn at rear of Three Tuns Hotel, Springhead	II		
DHT6877	Jessamine House, 15 High Street	*		
DHT7265	14 Lucas Lane.	II		
DHT7268	War memorial, Lucas Lane	11		
DHT7287	Mulberry Tree Cottage, 6 and 8 Springhead	11		
DHT7290	Tombstone in new cemetery to Mary Morwenno Bolitho, wife of Philip le Grand Gribble, Station Road	II		
DHT7564	Granary adjoining south corner of Ducklake, Springhead	II		
DHT7586	Spring House, 7 High Street	I		
DHT7767	Alder Cottage, 16 Lucas Lane	II		
DHT7769	Tombstone in new cemetery to Wolverlry Attwood Fordham, Station Road	II		
DHT7226	The Three Tuns Hotel public house, Springhead	II		
DHT7228	Forresters Cottages, now 14, 16, & 18 High Street, also known as 1, 2 and 3 Forresters Cottage.	*		
Events and A	Air photographs			
HER no.	Event	Report		
EHT1651	Air photo of cropmarks south of Ashwell Street, Ashwell			
EHT1740	Air photo of cropmarks of ring ditch & linear ditches			
EHT1745	Air photo of ring ditches, south of Ashwell Street			
EHT2124	Air photo of area south of Ashwell showing cropmarks of ring ditches			
EHT2472	Air photo of ring ditches, south of Ashwell Street			
EHT2815	Air photo of area to south of Ashwell showing cropmarks of ring ditches			
EHT2561				
EHT2563				
EHT2069	Air photo of cropmarks, south of Ashwell Street			



<enter title using properties under 'file'>

EHT3148	Air photo of cropmarks 1 and a quarter miles south of the village	
EHT4084	Observations at The Steppes, Springhead, 1970-90. See MHT 6979	Burleigh, G & Stevenson, M D. 2000. A decade of archaeological fieldwork in North Hertfordshire, 1989-1999. RNO 1352 p14
EHT4570	Evaluation at Townsend House, 22 Lucas Lane, Ashwell, 2000	Heritage Network 274
EHT4956	Evaluation of land at Station Road, Ashwell, 2001	Heritage Network 295
EHT5247	Watching brief at 3 Ashwell Street, Ashwell, 2003	
EHT1601	Monitoring of land next to Ashridge Farm, Ashwell, 2010	Heritage Network 868
EHT1604	Building recording at Jessamine House, 15 High Street, Ashwell, 2010	Heritage Network 851
EHT7012	Evaluation at 22 Lucas Lane, Ashwell, 2011	Heritage Network 879
EHT7013	Watching brief on land at 22 Lucas Lane, Ashwell, 2011	Heritage Network 912
EHT7222	Building appraisal of Whitby Farm, 35 High Street, Ashwell, 2011	Archaeological Solutions
EHT7048	Watching brief at 2 Forresters Cottages, 16 High Street, Ashwell, 2012	Heritage Network 945
EHT7398	Building recording at Whitby Farm, Silver Street & 35 High Street, Ashwell	Archaeological Solutions 1525
EHT7399	Evaluation at Whitby Farm, Silver Street & 35 High Street, Ashwell, 2012	Archaeological Solutions 1525

Table 1: All HER Monuments, Findspots, Listed Buildings and Events in the 0.5km search area



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bryant's map of Hertfordshire 1820 (CM88) Tithe Map of Ashwell, 1841 (DSA4/6/2) Enclosure Map of Ashwell 1863 (QS/E9) OS 1st Edition, 25 inch, 1877, Extract of Sheet IV, 9 OS 2nd Edition, 25 inch, 1898, Extract of Sheet IV, 9 OS 25 inch, Edition 1924, Extract of Sheet IV, 9 OS 25 inch, Revision of 1937, Extract of Sheet IV, 9 OS New Popular Edition 1946 http://www.npemap.org.uk/

Online sources

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APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details				
OASIS Number				
Project Name				
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	Finish			
Previous Work (by OA East)	Future Work			
Project Reference Codes				
Site Code	Planning App. No.			
HER No.	Related HER/OASIS No.			
Type of Project/Techniques Used Prompt				
Development Type				
Please select all techniques used:				
DBA				
Aerial Photography - interpretation	Documentary Search			
Aerial Photography - new 🗌 Visual Inspection (Site Visit)				
Monument Types & Period List feature types using the NMR Monument Type Thesaurus together with their respective periods. If no features were found, please state "none".				
Monument	Period			
Project Location				
County	Site Address (including postcode if possible)			
District				
Parish				



Project Originators

Organisation	
Project Brief Originator	
Project Design Originator	
Project Manager	
Supervisor	

Project Archives

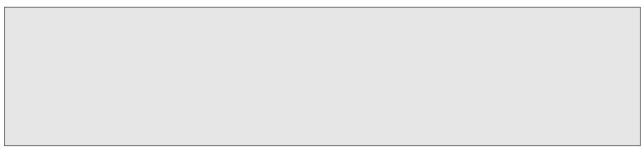
Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive

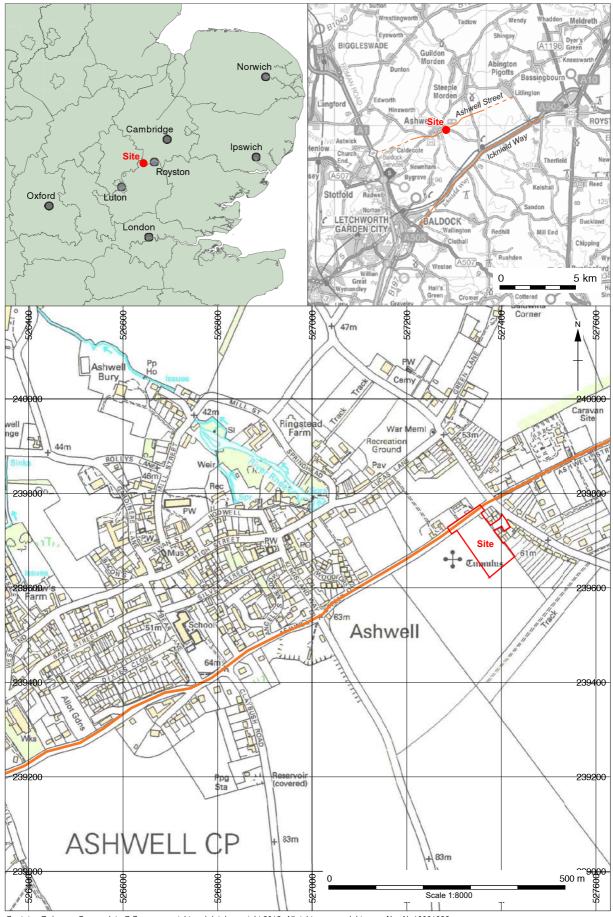
Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones			
Ceramics			
Environmental			
Glass			
Human Bones			
Industrial			
Leather			
Metal			
Stratigraphic			
Survey			
Textiles			
Wood			
Worked Bone			
Worked Stone/Lithic			
None			
Other			

Digital Media	Paper Media
Database	Aerial Photos
🔲 GIS	Context Sheet
Geophysics	Correspondence
Images	Diary
Illustrations	Drawing
Moving Image	☐ Manuscript
Spreadsheets	☐ Мар
Survey	Matrices
Text	Microfilm
Virtual Reality	Misc.
	Research/Notes
	Photos
	Plans
	Report
	Sections
	Survey

Notes:





Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 10001998 Figure 1: Site location map showing development area (red)



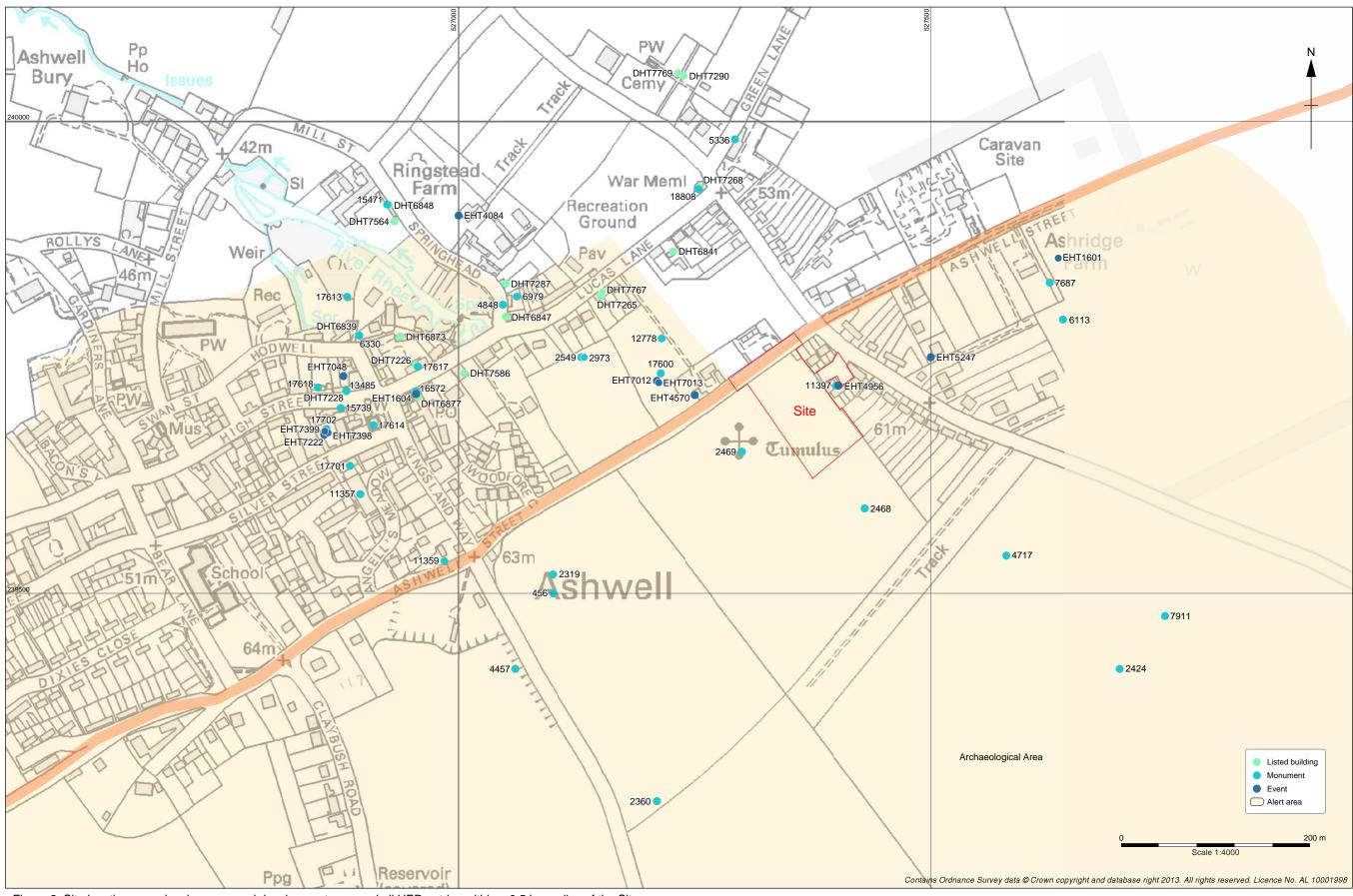


Figure 2: Site location map showing proposed development area and all HER entries within a 0.5 km radius of the Site

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Figure 3: Dury and Andrew's Map Hertfordshire 1766





Figure : ryant's map of Hertfordshire 1





Figure 5: ithe Map of Ashwell 1 1





Figure 6: Enclosure Map of Ashwell 1 63



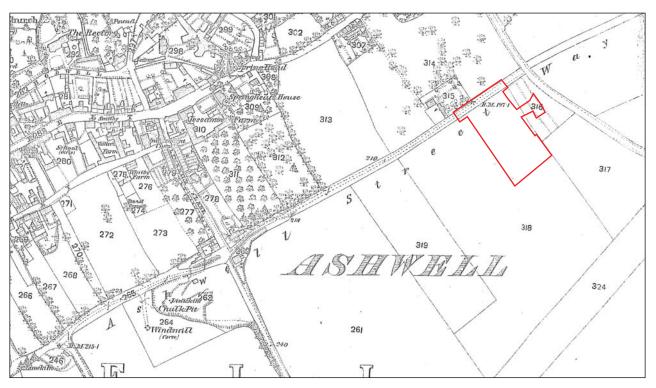


Figure 7: O 1st Edition 5 inch 1 77



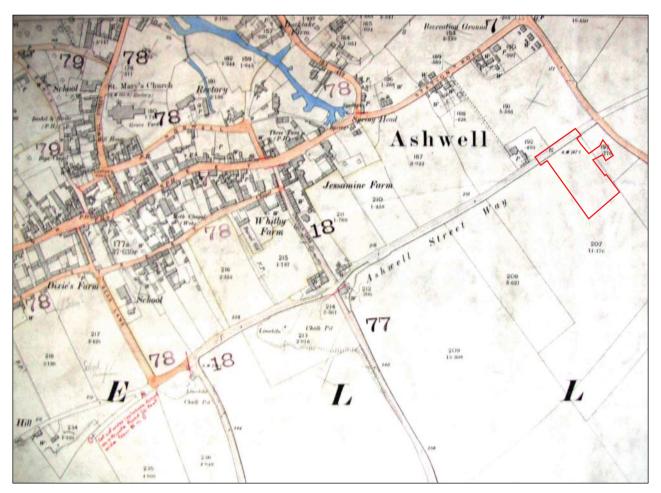


Figure : O nd Edition 5 inch 1



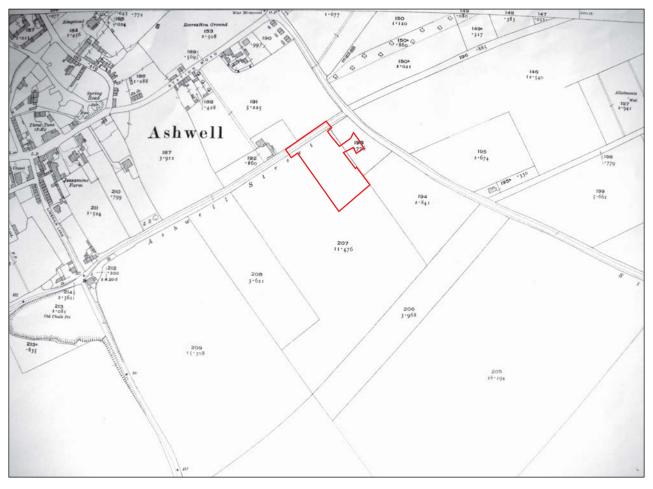
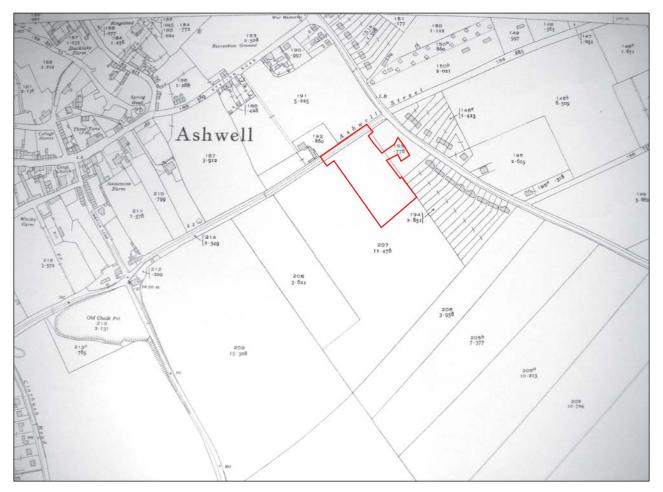


Figure : O 5 inch Edition 1





 $Figure \ 1 \ : \ O \qquad 5 \ inch \ Re \ ision \ of \ 1 \ \ 37$





Plate 1: Ashwell End, looking south-west





Plate 2: View to site, looking north-east





Plate 3: Aerial photo of the Site showing ring ditches, looking west. Frame no. BIZ41 (Copyright Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography)



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