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HINXTON HALL: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESKTOP STUDY

(TL 496/448)

ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OFFICE
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1 INTRODUCTION

The applicants, Fuller Peiser on behalf of Wellcome Trust, approached Cambridgeshire Archaeology for a desktop study as part of planning for a development at Hinxton Hall (TL 496/448). The development involves the construction of a series of research, conference, and residential facilities and the demolition of some existing buildings. This desktop study checks and verifies the known archaeological information for the area of the Hall and its environs, and makes recommendations for archaeological works and mitigating measures for the development.

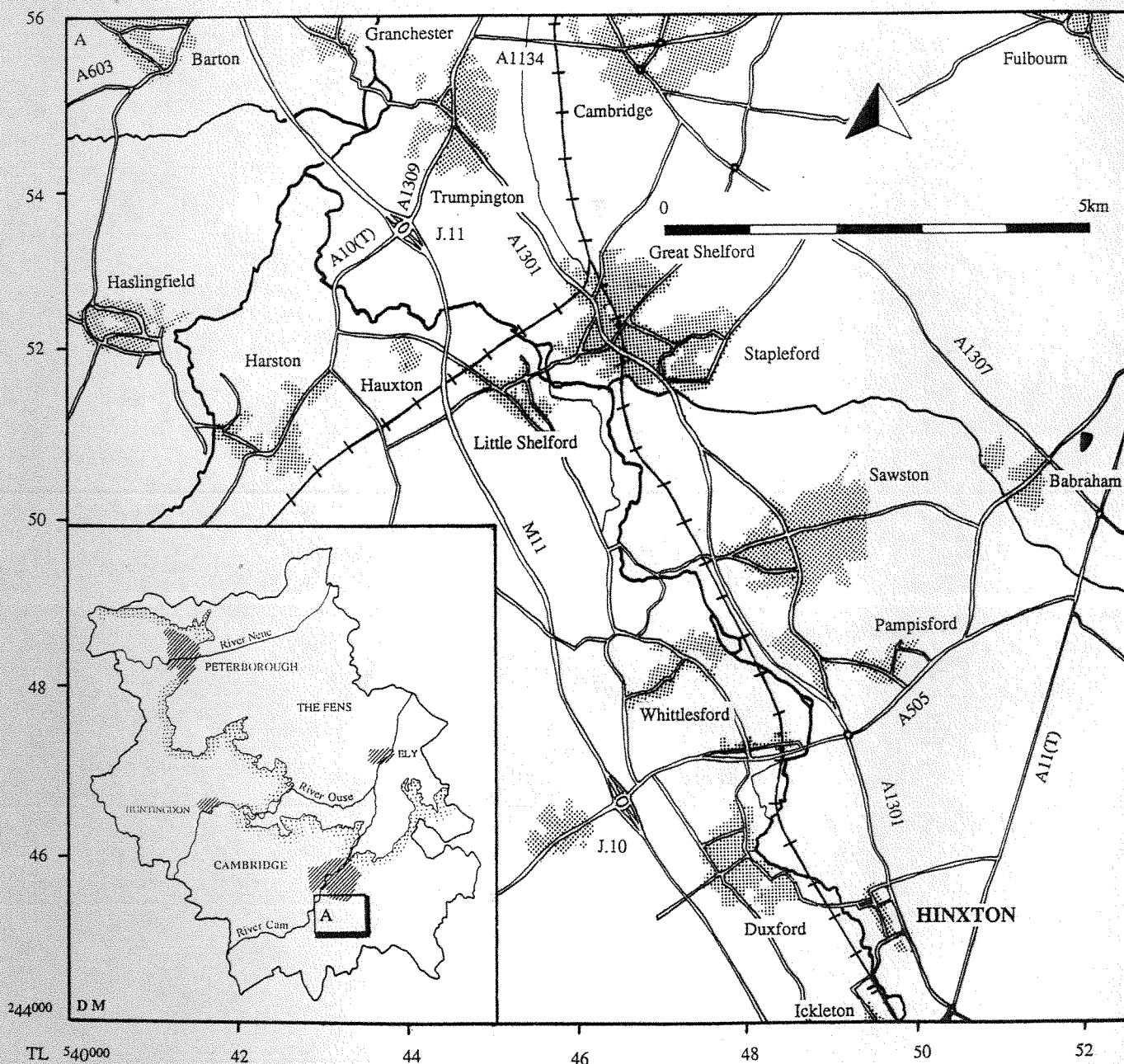


Figure 1 Location of Hinxton

2 IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The proposal is for building construction and demolition which will destroy any surviving archaeology underlying areas of ground works. Movement of contractor's machinery could cause damage to subsurface remains.

3 PLANNING POLICIES AFFECTING ARCHAEOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

3.1 National

Department of the Environment *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16)*

Para 6: Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction.

Para 8: Where nationally important remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.

Para 13: If physical preservation *in situ* is not feasible, an archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record' may be an acceptable alternative. From the archaeological point of view this should be regarded as a second best option.

Para 25: Local planning authorities are required to request a prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation before deciding upon a planning application on any site where important archaeological remains may exist. This evaluation may lead to requirements for preservation of all, or parts, of the site, or for further archaeological work.

3.2 Local: Cambridgeshire County Council Guidelines

Structure Plan Policy P14/12: The local planning authorities will exercise their powers of development control to preserve scheduled monuments and other important archaeological sites in the County.

Policy P14/13: Where there is no overriding case for the preservation of an archaeological site, opportunities will be sought prior to the granting of planning permission, for excavation and recording of the site.

4 GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 General Character

The parish of Hinxton has two principal areas: the lowland river valley and, to its east, the arable uplands. The Hall and its associated park lie in the former, on grounds with gentle slopes down to the River Cam. The site is bounded by Hinxton village to the north, and arable fields elsewhere. The 30m OD contour runs through the park.

4.2 Geology

The parish of Hinxton is comprised of two geological zones: the upland Middle Chalk and the alluvial terrace deposits of the Cam. Hinxton Hall and its park lie entirely upon the latter.

4.3 Soils

There are three soil map units in Hinxton: a stoneless, mainly calcareous clayey soil (8 14) on flat land filling the river valley close to its course, a well drained coarse and fine loam series of variable depth (571k), and a typical brown calcareous earth (511e) with similar characteristics to that preceding (571k). The latter is found in the upland chalk, while the former two are both present within the grounds of the Hall.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

River valleys have been favoured locations for settlement and communication from earliest times; the Cam valley at Hinxton is no exception. Study of the Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record indicates that, in the vicinity of Hinxton, a series of cropmarks occur showing the agricultural systems of Iron Age and Roman date. Palaeolithic and Mesolithic finds have not been recorded in this area. The earliest evidence of occupation in the area is a series of worked flints and a polished axe from Ickleton (SMR No 04114, 04168), and a series of Bronze Age tumuli in the same parish. However, finds from the Neolithic and Bronze Age are presently not known in Hinxton village. The Icknield Way runs close to the southern edge of the Hall park.

There is a major change in the quantity of evidence from the Iron Age onwards when extensive organised agricultural systems were established. These are visible as cropmarks in fields immediately south of Hinxton Hall Park (SMR No 08892).

The Roman period is equally well represented. There is a Romano-British settlement located across the river from Hinxton village (SMR No 04210,a) which has been scheduled (SAM No 76). The Roman town of Great Chesterford lies a small distance to the south of the site and associated roads and farms spread out towards Hinxton Hall Park. A Roman cemetery is situated close to the old railway track near Great Chesterford, and across the river in Ickleton there is a Roman villa (SMR No 04153, 04168). The latter has been scheduled as an ancient monument (SAM No 62).

After the Roman period, the Saxons reused the cemetery site at Great Chesterford. Hinxton lies in a strategic position between the Saxon territorial or defensive works of Bran and Brent Ditches.

The village of Hinxton was well established by the time of the Domesday Book (Wright, 1978). The name was spelt variously as Hestitona, Hestitone, and Hincstitona which means Hengest's Farm (Reaney, 1943). Two manors had been established by 1279, and the village population did not change much from this time until the 16th century. At Domesday Sheriff Picot held the two manors of Hinxton. The Church, dedicated to St Mary (now to St Mary and St John the Evangelist) existed by 1092. The present building retains parts dated to the late 12th century, but is extensively 14th century in date.

Medieval sites in Hinxton include the church, the site of a watermill, and several late medieval houses in the village. The local economy has been based on arable farming and Enclosure was put into effect in 1833 after an Act of 1820. The parkland of the

Hall was established between this time and the survey of Hinxton for the OS Series 25" map of 1885. The creation of the grounds of the Hall involved the truncation of the south of the village and re-routing of the roads around the grounds of the park.

The first major building on the Hinxton Hall site was built in the mid 18th century and has since been remodelled several times. The Hall passed to commercial ownership in 1953 and various additional buildings have been constructed within the park. Presently, the Hall is a grade II * listed building, and the Stable Block, Game Larder, and North Lodge are all listed grade II.

6 THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

The SMR entries for Hinxton Hall and the surrounding area are presented in Figure 2. The SMR is a computer and map based database providing detailed information on known archaeological sites within the County. The data presented is based on currently available evidence and therefore should not be seen as a definitive list. Entries from the Essex SMR are also included on Figure 2, but it has not been possible to obtain all the background information for these entries at present. Most of these, however, relate to the Roman settlement of Great Chesterford.

The information contained in the SMR is only as accurate as the original source material. Therefore, the location of some entries may not be exact, and others may fall within a broader area than mapped.

Constraints upon the development of the grounds of Hinxton Hall are the flooding of the western part of the park which precludes building, the amenity value of the parkland on the north-western side, and the views from the south-west of the village and the Hall.

Development will, therefore, concentrate on the areas of existing buildings and on the eastern part of the site. Recommendations are based upon this consideration, but more closely targeted comments may be made if greater detail of the development plans becomes available. This will have cost-saving implications.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Areas of Archaeological Importance

The archaeological background clearly indicates three areas requiring further investigation:

- (1) The old Hinxton High Street area and associated building plots.
- (2) The southern edge of the site where archaeological features appear as cropmarks outside the park and may continue into the site. It should be noted that the parkland and its alluvial covering may well be preventing aerial survey from revealing features on the site.
- (3) There are various 'earthworks' (low mounds and depressions) within the park, particularly between the Mausoleum and the Kitchen Gardens, which should also be considered of archaeological importance.
(These areas are labelled 1 - 3 respectively on the map insert, Figure 2).

7.2 Programme of Work

The County Archaeologist's Office has already stated the need for a site evaluation and therefore the following programme of work is recommended:

Phase 1 Strategic **geophysical survey** of the areas of archaeological importance to identify surviving remains and map them for the placing of evaluation trenches.

Phase 2 Limited **evaluation trenching** of 2% of the area affected by the development to examine the condition, quality, extent, and date of any surviving archaeological remains.

A **watching brief** should be maintained upon additional works in other parts of the site.

The County Archaeologist's Office may require further (Phase 3) investigations if the findings of the evaluation are significant. This is usually outlined in a brief provided by the CAO.

8 RESOURCES

Staffing The above works will require a Project Manager, a Supervisor and two Site Assistants.

Equipment A JCB with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket will be needed to open the trenches.
Mobile office and toilet facilities will be needed if such facilities are not available on site.

Timetable Day 1: Initiation of project, Geophysical survey team on site.
Day 3: Results of the survey in preliminary form for locating trenches.
Day 5: Opening of machine trenches in all areas.
Day 6: Recording of archaeology begins, using Cambridgeshire Archaeology's single context recording system.
Day 12: Completion of works on site and backfilling of trenches.*
Day 22: Presentation of preliminary report with production of full report as soon as possible thereafter.

* If particular reinstatement quality is required (e.g. returfing) this should be stated to Cambridgeshire Archaeology as soon as possible as it gives rise to additional cost.

Specialists A geophysical survey team will be needed.

Archiving and Storage The site archive and finds will be stored with Cambridgeshire Archaeology.

Budget

| | |
|---------------------|----------|
| Salaries: | £2344.45 |
| Machining: | £200 |
| Site Accommodation: | £175 |
| Specialists: | £2000 |
| Mileage: | £61.10 |
| Overheads: | £1434.17 |

The range of costs will be between £4780.55 - £6214.72

Please note that Cambridgeshire Archaeology is a non-profit making service and operates on a cost-recovery basis; only actual expenditure will be invoiced for.

If there are any queries about this project please contact:

Dr Tim Reynolds
Project Manager
Cambridgeshire Archaeology

9 REFERENCES

Hodge, C.A.H. and Seale, R.S. 1966 *The Soils of the District Around Cambridge*. Memoir of the Soil Survey of Great Britain.

Reaney, P.H. 1943 *The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*. English Place Name Society 19, Cambridge University Press.

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Also: County SMRs for Cambridgeshire and Essex.

10 GLOSSARY

Anglo-Saxon The period dating between the withdrawal of the Roman legions in AD410 and the Norman invasion of 1066. Within this period several ethnic groups from northern Europe vied for control of the British Isles, including the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, and Norwegians. The latter two groups are collectively known as the Vikings and became involved in British politics from the eighth century, later than the others.

Artefact Any object made by people.

Bronze Age Prehistoric period c. 2000 - 700 BC when bronze was used for many types of tools and weapons.

Cropmarks Archaeological features below the ploughsoil can affect the growth of sensitive crops through moisture retention or loss. These discrepancies in crop growth can be easily detected from the air, and by taking photographs the cropmark patterns can be plotted onto maps and given provisional interpretation.

Evaluation Trenching This is the machine opening of trenches to expose underlying archaeology which can then be sample excavated and recorded, allowing collection of materials for further investigation such as dating and environmental reconstruction.

Geophysical Survey Investigation of the changes in the magnetic and electrical characteristics of the soil which can result from human activity. It is not invasive and can be used to map subsurface features.

Iron Age Prehistoric period c.700 BC - AD43.

Medieval Period The historic period that begins with William the Conqueror's invasion of 1066, post-medieval refers to dates after 1500.

Mesolithic The period from the end of the Last Ice Age at 10 000 BP until the start of the Neolithic period at 3500BC.

Neolithic The prehistoric period c. 3500 - 2000 BC when farming and pottery were introduced.

Roman Historic period AD43-410 when much of Britain was part of the Roman empire. The term Romano-British is now widely used to describe the people of this period, as few were Romans themselves, but were a provincial manifestation of the empire developing in a unique way. Romano-British culture continued after the removal of the legions in 410 for a while.

Watching Brief This technique involves the watching of development works by an archaeologist to record materials which may become exposed. Limited sampling of deposits may be undertaken and works should be stopped for short periods to allow this to go ahead and if significant remains are unexpectedly revealed.

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