

**Highfield Lane Campus, Oaklands College,  
St Albans, Hertfordshire**

**An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment  
for Oaklands College**

by Steve Ford  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code OCHB04/82b

**October 2004**

## Summary

**Site name:** Highfield Lane Campus, Oaklands College, St Albans, Hertfordshire

**Grid reference:** TL 185 064

**Site activity:** Desk-based assessment

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Steve Ford

**Site code:** OCH 04/82b

**Area of site:** 86.2ha

**Summary of results:** The study revealed a modest range of sites or finds within the study area with several possible areas of interest within the site itself. The site is traversed by the projected line of a Roman road. Mainly on the basis of its size, it is concluded that the site has high archaeological potential.

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Report edited/checked by: Sian Anthony✓ 13.10.04 Steve Preston✓ 13.10.04
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# Highfield Lane Campus, Oaklands College, St Albans, Hertfordshire An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

by Steve Ford

Report 04/82b

## Introduction

This desk-based study is an assessment of the archaeological potential of an irregular plot of land located to the east of St Albans, Hertfordshire (Fig. 1) (TL 185 064). The project was commissioned by Mr Piers Cartwright-Taylor of GVA Grimley, 10 Stratton Street, London, W1J 8JR on behalf of Oaklands College and comprises the first stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains which may be affected by redevelopment of the area.

## Site description, location and geology

The site is located on the eastern margins of the city (Figs 1 and 2). It is bounded wholly or partly by several roads, namely Colney Heath Lane to the north, Hill End Lane to the east and south and Highfield Lane to the south-west. The site is bisected north-south by a green lane (Beastreys Lane) and by Colney Heath Lane. To the north of the site, this area is occupied by a school and an area of paddock, mown but not otherwise used. Other areas of paddock are present to the north-west and east. At various locations the site boundaries coincide with built areas.

During a site visit on the 28th September 2004, it was noted that the site was largely in arable use. The site in total occupies 86.2 ha of which the built area at Home Farm to the south-east amounts to 1.6ha. Hill End Farm lies at the centre of the site but is not included in the proposal area. Small areas of woodland are present and within the site boundary towards the east, a sewage treatment works is present.

The site is bisected east-west by an east flowing stream (a tributary of the River Colne) within a marked valley. Otherwise the ground slopes gently towards the south east. The majority of the site lies at a height of up to 85m above Ordnance Datum with the lower areas at the east end of the valley at about 72m above OD. The underlying geology for the majority of the site is Boulder Clay but with valley gravel and possibly alluvium on the floor of the valley (BGS 1978).

## Planning background and development proposals

Planning permission is to be sought from The City and District of St Albans to redevelop the site. Currently there are no further details for the development proposal.

*Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 1990) provides guidance relating to archaeology within the planning process. It points out that where a desk-based assessment has shown that there is a strong possibility of significant archaeological deposits in a development area it is reasonable to provide more detailed information from a field evaluation so that an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on archaeology can be devised:

Paragraph 21 states:

‘Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer’s own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out...’

Should the presence of archaeological deposits be confirmed further guidance is provided. *Archaeology and Planning* stresses preservation *in situ* of archaeological deposits as a first consideration as in paragraphs 8 and 18.

Paragraph 8 states:

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

Paragraph 18 states:

‘The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled...’

However, for archaeological deposits that are not of such significance it is appropriate for them to be ‘preserved by record’ (i.e., fully excavated and recorded by a competent archaeological contractor) prior to their destruction or damage.

Paragraph 25 states:

‘Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation *in situ* of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the development and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself ... that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains.’

Further guidance is provided by the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991–2011, which lists

- ‘vii) Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological remains of both national and more local importance, and their setting;
- ‘viii) Listed buildings and their settings and other buildings of architectural, archaeological or historic merit; and

‘ix) Conservation Areas’

as ‘Critical Capital’ which will be given appropriate protection.

The St Albans City and District Local Plan (SALP 1994) takes a similar stance.

Policy 109 states:

‘Planning applications for development which would adversely affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument, as defined on the proposals map and listed below, will be refused on archaeological grounds unless prior scheduled monument consent has been obtained from the Secretary of State for the Environment. If scheduled monument consent has been granted, the District Council will seek to preserve the amenity of ancient monuments by resisting proposals within scheduled areas which would detract from their character...’

Policy 110 states:

‘Planning permission will not be granted for development which would adversely affect the remains within, or the character of, the sites for local preservation as defined on the proposals map and listed below. Development may be permitted in exceptional circumstances, following evaluation, if the Council is satisfied that important remains would not be destroyed or the character of the site adversely affected. The evaluation, which may involve limited excavation or other work (e.g. geophysical survey) is to be carried out by the Council or an archaeologist approved by the Council. Planning permissions will normally be subject to conditions requiring facilities for the Council to record remains by excavation in advance of construction and/or during construction.

‘Voluntary agreements will be sought (e.g. under section 106) to cover the cost of work, including any initial evaluation, and to ensure that finds made during the course of such work are donated to the Council. Voluntary agreements will also be sought to ensure the continued preservation and management of important remains.’

Policy 111 states:

‘Within the sites listed below and defined on the Proposals Map, the District Council will not normally refuse planning applications on archaeological grounds. However, following evaluation, planning permissions may be subjected to a condition requiring facilities for the Council to record remains by excavation in advance of construction and/or during construction. The evaluation, which may involve limited excavation or other work (e.g. geophysical survey) is to be carried out by the Council or an archaeologist approved by the Council.

‘Voluntary agreements will be sought (e.g. under section 106) to cover the cost of work, including any initial evaluation, and to ensure that finds made during the course of such work are donated to the Council.’

The site does not lie within an Area of Archaeological Significance within the District.

## **Methodology**

The assessment of the site was carried out by the examination of pre-existing information from a number of sources recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists paper ‘*Standards in British Archaeology*’ covering desk-based studies. These sources include historic and modern maps, the Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Record, geological maps and any relevant publications or reports.

## Archaeological background

### *General background*

The site lies on a geological outcrop (boulder clay) which is not noted for its rich archaeological heritage, though this is more likely to be due to the lack of responsiveness of the soil in the formation of cropmarks visible from the air. Earlier prehistoric remains are extremely scarce in Hertfordshire as a whole, but recent overviews consider that for the Iron Age in Hertfordshire at least, there is an expansion of the settled area onto the margins of the boulder clay (Bryant, 1997, 25). Systematic surveys of large areas, such as within the city of Milton Keynes almost routinely locate Iron Age settlement on similar clay land areas (Williams 1993; Zeepvat 1991).

By the late Iron Age, St Albans was a major centre of the type known as an *oppidum*, called *Verlamion* (Bryant and Niblett 1997, Haselgrove and Millett, 1997). These settlement complexes often spread over large areas with concentrations of industrial, ritual and settlement activity within boundaries usually defined by earthworks or natural features such as a marsh or river, set within a hinterland of smaller farms and enclosures. The *oppidum* as currently known does not extend so far south as to reach the site, but the land would certainly have been within its sphere of influence. Finds of late Iron Age date are known in a wide arc around the modern city.

The site lies within the hinterland of the Roman town of *Verulamium* which stood just to the west of the modern day St Albans. Verulamium was a major Roman town, the capital and administrative centre of the *civitas* of the Catuvellauni, possibly also rising to *municipium* status. While the town was the subject of pioneering archaeological work by, *inter alios*, Mortimer Wheeler (summarized by Wachter 1995, 214–241) so that it has one of the best-known of Roman town plans, less is known of the surrounding area than in some other areas and less recent work has been done here than in many other major Roman towns. Given the importance of the town is reasonably anticipated, that the environs would have been well settled and farmed during Roman times. It is also quite common for Roman cemeteries to be located alongside major routes into towns, just outside their boundaries.

Late Roman and Saxon St Albans remain under-represented compared to the earlier periods. A pre-Conquest origin for the medieval town is assumed, but it cannot as yet be pushed much earlier with great conviction (Ayers 1997). The medieval period in the area is dominated by the Abbey, consecrated by Henry I in 1116.

### *Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Record*

A search of the Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Records (SMR) was made on the 10th September 2004, covering a 1 km radius around the site. This revealed 17 entries within the study area. One entry lies within the development area itself and a second is enclosed by it. The results from this search are listed in Appendix 1, and summarized below, with the locations plotted on Figure 1.

#### Prehistoric

Four entries are for prehistoric times, three of which are for isolated finds. The earliest entry is that for a lower Palaeolithic hand axe to the east of the study area [Fig. 1, 15]. The hand axe is roughly made and may also have been a core. Two other axe heads are recorded. A Mesolithic tranchet axe is recorded from the east of the study area [2] and a Neolithic polished flint axe from the west [1]. A collection of struck flint of later prehistoric date (Neolithic/Bronze Age) along with sherds of Bronze Age pottery were recovered during a watching brief to the south of the site [12]. It is not clear if this represents a cluster of finds indicating the presence of an occupation site, or reflects a more intensely searched area than elsewhere (Montagu-Puckle and West 1994).

#### Roman

Three entries relate to this period. Of most significance is the projected route of the Roman road from St Albans to Cheshunt (Viatores 1964, route 212) which traverses the site in, more or less, an east-west direction [4]. A possible metalled surface was recorded at Colney Heath to the east which may represent this road, but the width was narrow, the metalling shallow and no dating evidence was recorded.

Roman pottery and tile were found during a watching brief to the south of the site [10] (Montagu-Puckle and West 1994), which was near to the area occupied by some cropmarks but did not extend to the cropmark itself. These cropmarks are thought to reflect the presence of buildings and if so, these may be of Roman date [11].

#### Medieval/early Post-Medieval

Five entries relate to the medieval or early post-medieval period. One of these is for the manor of Cell Barnes, though the exact location of the manor house is unclear [16]. Little Cell Barnes Farmhouse is a Listed Building of late medieval origins with later additions [14]. Similarly, Hill End Farm is also a Listed Building with

possible late medieval origins and later additions [13]. The latter stands at the centre of the proposal area but is excluded from the proposal site itself.

A small amount of medieval pottery was recovered during a watching brief south of the site [10] (Montagu-Puckle and West 1994).

Finally, a series of banks and drainage ditches within woodland are possibly of medieval or post-medieval date and probably reflect woodland management practice [9].

### Modern

The remaining entries are all of 19th or 20th century date. Two entries relate to post boxes [5, 6], one to a coal duty marker [8], one to the site of a former railway station that served the construction phase and use of Hill End Hospital [7] and finally a parish church built in 1845 which is a Listed Building [17].

### Undated

A series of oval and rectangular enclosures visible from the air which are undated, lie to the south of the study area [3].

### *Scheduled Ancient Monuments*

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments located within the boundaries of the site or within the immediate environs of the site.

## **Cartographic and documentary sources**

A range of Ordnance Survey and other historical maps of the area were consulted at Hertfordshire Record Office in order to ascertain what activity had been taking place throughout the site's later history and whether this may have affected any possible archaeological deposits within the proposal area (see Appendix 2).

The earliest map available of the area is Saxton's map of Hertfordshire, 1577 (Fig. 3). For this small scale map few details are present and the location of the site can be identified only approximately. The site area is not mentioned by name.

Other small scale county maps by Seller (1676), Oliver (1695) and Warburton (1749), similarly provide no detail for the area of the site though some of the southern boundary, Highfield Lane, is depicted on all three maps.

Dury and Andrews' map of Hertfordshire, 1766 (Fig. 4) provides more detail for the environs of the site but is slightly damaged for some of this area. The majority of the site boundaries are readily identifiable with Highfield Lane and Colney Heath Lane shown. Hill End Farm can also be identified as can the green lane (Beastreys Lane on the tithe map) which bisects the site north–south. Much of the site area is depicted as arable land however to the north-east buildings forming part of what appears to be a hamlet adjacent to Smallford Farm (*Smallfoot Green*) also lie to the south of Colney Heath Lane and some of the structures appear to lie within the proposal area.

The tithe map of St Albans St Stephens in 1838 (Fig. 5) shows much detail recognizable on the present day maps. A few areas of certain and possible woodland were present as were some field boundaries which are no longer extant. The land was in use as a mixture of arable and pasture. The north-western boundary of the proposal site only partly follows boundaries shown on the tithe map. The buildings present just within the north-east corner of the proposal site are now called Hollybush Farm and may have contracted in size from that depicted on the previous map.

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map in 1898 (Fig. 6) again shows the environs of the site in detail and shows relatively little change from 1838. Hollybush Farm is now called Hollybush Hall and a cottage and garden in 1838 at the south western end of the site have been expanded to become an unnamed farm complex subsequently known as Home Farm.

The 1924 edition of the Ordnance Survey shows few further changes. By 1937 (Fig. 7) the principal changes are the construction of a sewage works and the presence of woodland on the southernmost part of the site. This map is similar to the present day.

#### *Documentary Sources*

No documentary sources have been found which relate specifically to the history of this parcel of land. Historically, the site lay within the parish of St Peter which included further chapelries which became separate parishes in the 14th century (VCH 1908, 264). The parish of St Peter appears to have been redefined in the early part of the 20th century with the site now lying partly within London Colney and Colney Heath parishes. It would also appear that for tithing purposes, the proceeds were collected by St Stephens. The manor was known as Newland Squillers in the 15th century and Newlane subsequently and was bought by the Abbot of St Albans in the early 15th century.

St Albans itself was not a large town in the Domesday Book, assessed at just 10 hides, although the church of St Albans was a major landholder. It is unclear in which manor or demesne the site may have fallen in this period.

### **Listed buildings**

There are no Listed Buildings on the site. Three listed buildings stand within the study area, all grade II (see Appendix 1). One of these, Hill End Farm [Fig. 1, 13] is surrounded by the proposal site, but not included within it. Any development proposals will be required to consider the setting of this complex.

### **Registered Parks and Gardens; Registered Battlefields**

There are no registered parks, gardens or battlefields located on or within the close vicinity of the site.

### **Aerial Photographs**

A search was made of the English Heritage aerial photographic collection on 17th September 2004. This revealed 25 specialist (oblique) photographs and 121 vertical prints for the area taken between 1946 and 1992. No cropmarks of archaeological interest were noted for the site itself though areas beyond the southern boundary of the study area revealed a range of cropmarks of oval and rectangular form (Appendix 1, 3).

The Cambridge University Collection had no coverage for the area.

### **Historic Hedgerows**

Many of the hedges present on the site are also indicated as boundaries on the various historic maps, such as the Tithe map of 1838. These do not meet the archaeological or historical criteria for definition as 'historically important' under Part Two of Schedule 1 of The Hedgerows Regulations 1997, with one possible exception. It is unclear if the site boundary which lies immediately north of Hill End Farm is an important hedge. This farm is a listed building with some possible archaeological interest as the fabric of the structure includes 15th century components. The farm is also listed within the county Sites and Monuments Record and the boundary is present in 1838 and so is defined as 'historic' in the Regulations.

The south-west boundary of the site on Highfield Lane also forms the boundary between the parishes of Colney Heath and London Colney but these may be fairly modern administrative creations as for tithe purposes

the site lay with the parish of St Albans St Stephens and previously St Peters. It is therefore unlikely that this hedge would be regarded as important on the archaeological/historical criteria of the Regulations.

## **Discussion**

In considering the archaeological potential of the study area, various factors must be taken into account, including previously recorded archaeological sites, previous land-use and disturbance and future land-use including the proposed development.

The cartographic evidence indicates that the site does not lie within or close to any historic centres of population but does surround a probable late medieval farm (Hill End Farm) and includes an early post-medieval farm (Hollybush Farm) that may have been part of a hamlet at least as early as early post-medieval times.

The Sites and Monuments Record revealed relatively little of archaeological interest in the study area, considering the size of the site, but with a range of prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval material present. The site does not contain any known sites nor any Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Of particular note is the presence of the projected route of a Roman road from St Albans to Cheshunt across the full width of the site. The presence of the road itself is of less significance than if the road corridor is a focus for roadside settlement and burial.

Statistically, there is a chance of archaeological deposits being present on almost any site, despite any lack of positive evidence pre-existing, such as can be assessed by a desktop study. The larger the site area, so the chances of encountering an archaeological site increase proportionately. For the proposal site with an area of 86 ha, several sites should be anticipated. For example, in a survey of the adjoining county of Bedfordshire, which has a similar range of geological outcrops and topography to that within Hertfordshire and the proposal area, a density of Roman settlements alone of up to two sites per square kilometre are recorded (Simco 1984). The density recorded for Bedfordshire does not include sites of other periods nor include the results of any intensive fieldwork.

On the basis of its extent, it has to be considered therefore that this site has high archaeological potential. Further work in the form of a field evaluation will be necessary to determine to what extent archaeological deposits are present across the site. The scheme for an evaluation, which may be able to utilise a range of both invasive and non invasive techniques will need to be drawn up and approved by the archaeological adviser to the local planning authority and implemented by a competent archaeological contractor, such as an Organization Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists, approved by the Council. The information provided by the

fieldwork can then be used to draw up a mitigation strategy to minimize the effects of development on any archaeological deposits particularly with an input to any design layout.

## References

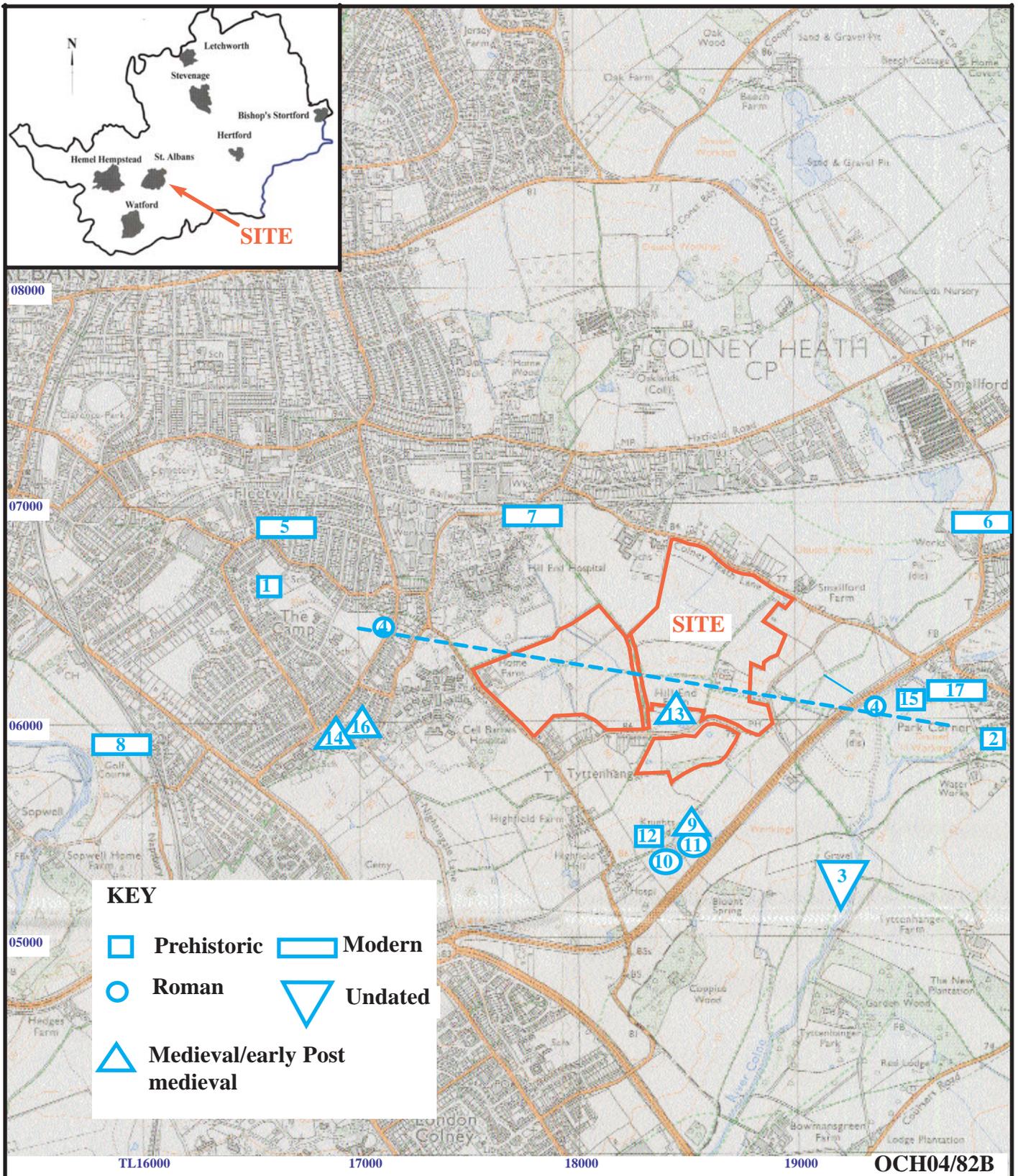
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**APPENDIX 1: Sites and Monuments Records within a 1km search radius of the development site**

<i>No</i>	<i>SMR no</i>	<i>NGR (TL)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Note</i>
1	599	166 067	Polished flint axe	Neolithic	
2	1883	200 059	Flint tranchet axe	Mesolithic	
3	4408	1925 0532	Oval and rectangular enclosures	Undated	Cropmarks
4	4656 and 9532	195 060 and 1944 0601	Road	Roman	Proposed route of Viatores route 212 from TL1712 0644 to 2119 0553. Possible metallated surface excavated but undated
5	5214	1673 0692	Pillar box	20th Century	Edward VIII
6	5301	2020 0695	Letter box	19th Century	
7	5474	1769 0698	Railway station	20th Century	Site of Hill End station
8	5734	199 059	Coal duty marker	19th Century	Cast iron column
9	7979	1846 0544	Earthwork	Medieval/ post-medieval	Linear bank and network of drainage ditches within woodland
10	9195	1840 0533	Pottery and tile Pottery	Roman and Medieval	Pottery and tile sherds found during watching brief during tree planting
11	9218	1835 0538	Buildings	Roman?	Cropmarks, possibly walls, of buildings
12	9219	1840 0540	Struck flint and pottery	Neolithic/Bronze Age	Surface finds during watching brief during tree planting
13	9491	1844 0600	Farm house	Medieval/ Post medieval	Hill End Farm. Structure may be of 15th century date with 18th century additions. Listed Grade II
14	9735	1695 0590	Farmhouse	Medieval/ Post medieval	Little Cell Barnes Farm. Structure may be of 15th century date with 16th and 17th century additions. Listed Grade II
15	9751	1940 0605	Flint hand axe	Palaeolithic	Roughout hand axe or core.
16	9872	1697 0590	Manor	Medieval	Cell Barnes Manor. Manor house possibly at Little Cell Barnes or Great Cell Barnes
17	11237	1970 0617	Church	19th Century	Parish church of St Marks, built in 1845. Listed Grade II

## **APPENDIX 2: Historic and modern maps consulted**

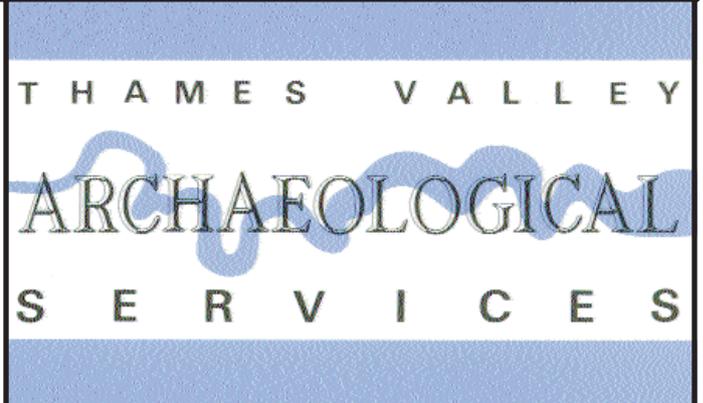
- 1577 Saxton's map of Hertfordshire (Fig. 3)
- 1676 Seller's map of Hertfordshire
- 1695 Oliver's map of Hertfordshire
- 1749 Warburton's map of Hertfordshire
- 1766 Dury and Andrews' map of Hertfordshire (Fig. 4)
- 1838 St Stephens, Tithe map (Fig. 5)
- 1898 Second Edition Ordnance Survey XXXV.5 and XXV.9 25" (Fig. 6)
- 1924 Ordnance Survey XXXV.5 and XXV.9 25"
- 1937 Ordnance Survey XXXV.5 and XXV.9 25" (Fig. 7)

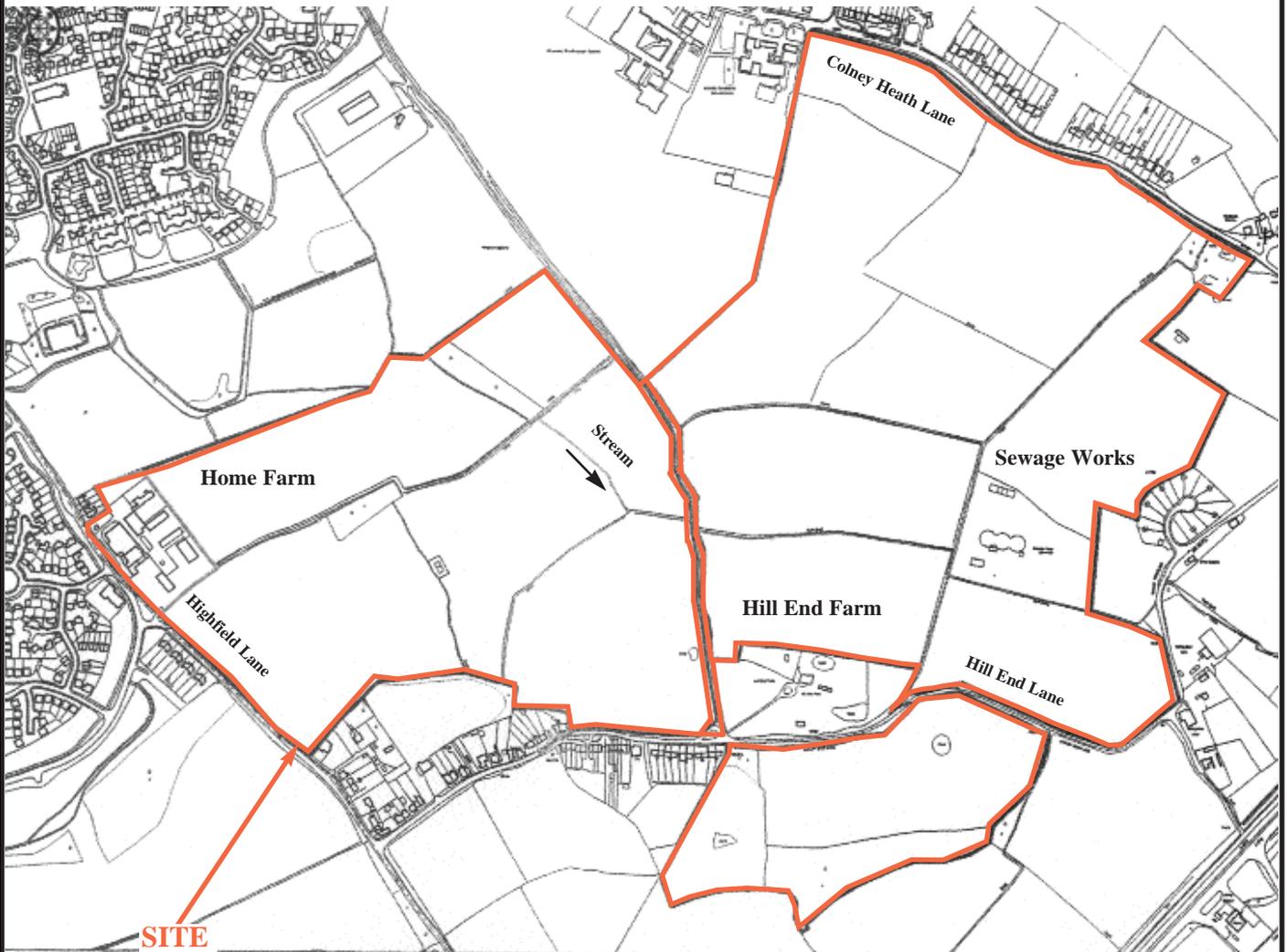


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Figure 1. Location of site within St Albans and Hertfordshire showing SMR finds.

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Figure 2. Site Plan

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Figure 3. Saxton's map of Hertfordshire, 1577

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Figure 4. Dury and Andrews 1766

T H A M E S   V A L L E Y  
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Site boundary (approx.)

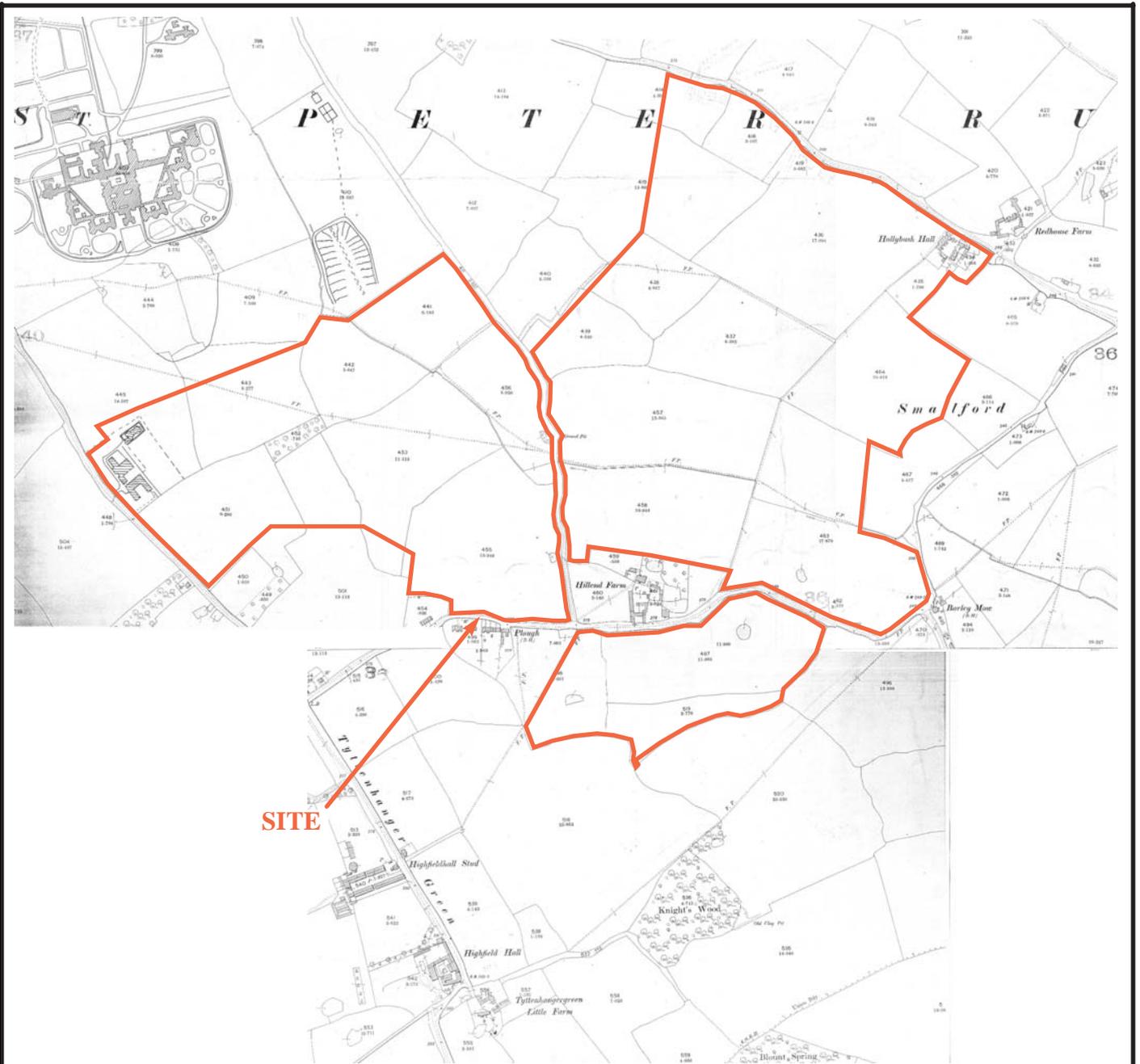


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Figure 5. St Alban's St Stephens's Tithe, 1838

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Figure 6. Second Edition Ordnance Survey, 1898

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Figure 7. 1937 Ordnance Survey map

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