

## Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT: LAND AT SHOOTERSWAY & DURRANTS LANE BERKHAMSTED HERTFORDSHIRE**

*on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council,  
Taylor Wimpey Developments Ltd & Egerton-Rothesay School*



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**January 2008**

**ASC: 1025/DLB/1**

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## Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	1025	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	DLB
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Berkhamsted		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Berkhamsted (unparished)		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	SP 9750 0788		
<i>Site area:</i>	14.2 hectares		
<i>Present use:</i>	Mixed use: agricultural, recreational & school premises		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	School rebuilding and residential development		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Pre-planning		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	Dacorum Borough		
<i>Date of assessment:</i>	January 2008		
<i>Commissioned by:</i>	Woolf Bond Planning The Mitfords Basingstoke Road Three Mile Cross Reading RG7 1AT		
<i>Clients:</i>	Hertfordshire County Council Taylor Wimpey Developments Ltd Egerton-Rothesay School		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Jeremy Woolf		

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2008
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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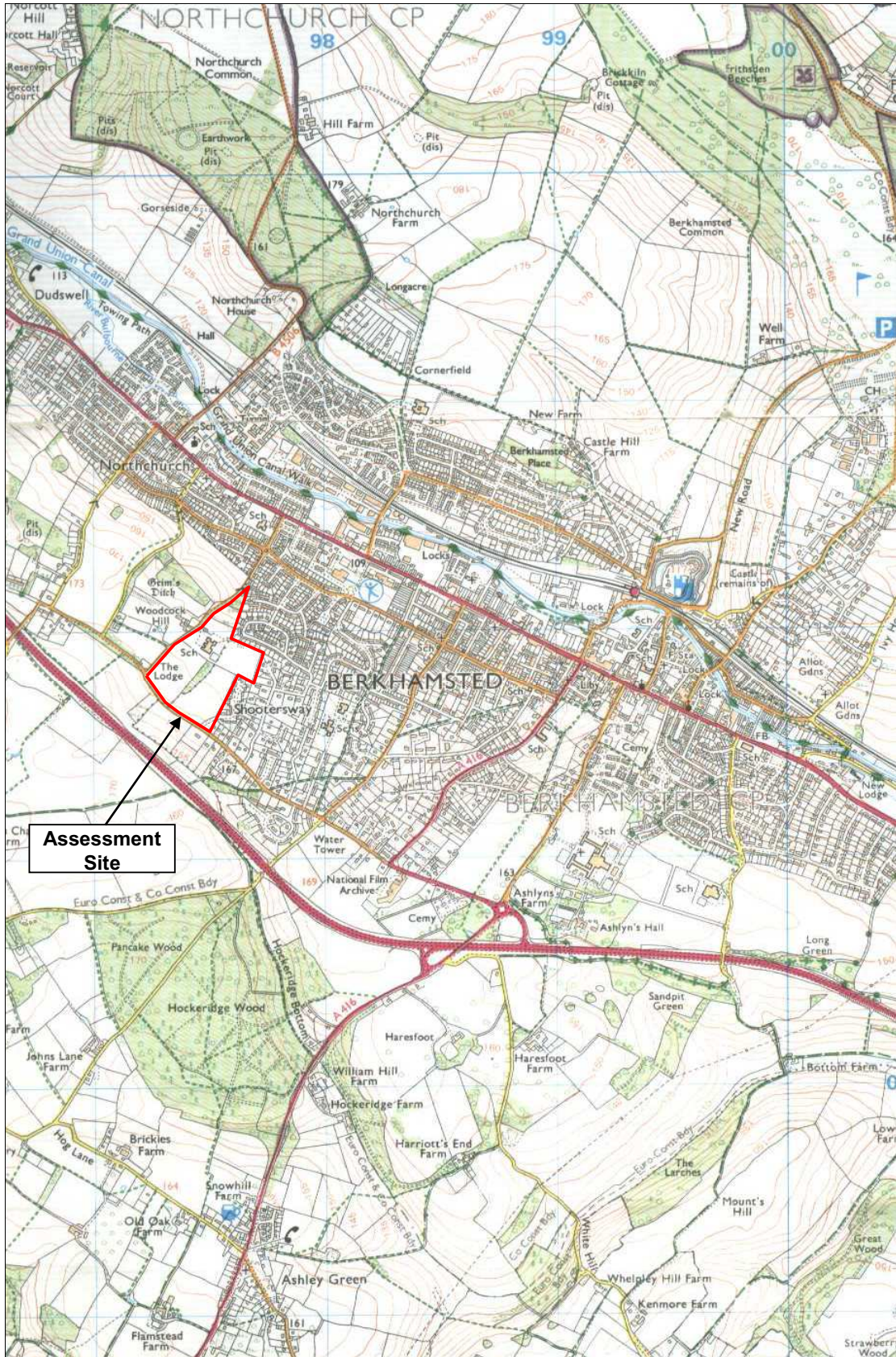


Figure 1: General location (scale: 1:25,000)

## Summary

*In January 2008 an archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken of land adjacent to Shootersway and Durrants Lane, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, to provide information on the potential impact of future development on the archaeological and historical environment of the area. The only significant archaeological feature recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site is the prehistoric territorial boundary known as Grim's Ditch, the alignment of which crosses the site from east to west. No other archaeological features or finds have been recorded on the site. Apart from the buildings of the Egerton-Rothesay School the site appears to have undergone little disturbance other than agricultural use. In conclusion, the archaeological potential of the site is assessed to be mostly low, with a higher potential on the projected alignment of Grim's Ditch.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In January 2008 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of land at the junction of Durrants Lane and Shootersway, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by *Woolf Bond Planning* on behalf of the clients, *Hertfordshire County Council*, *Taylor Wimpey Developments Ltd* and *Egerton-Rothesay School*, and was carried out according to a standard ASC desk-based assessment (Appendix 1).

### 1.2 *Planning Background*

This desk-based assessment is required as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) prior to the submission of a formal development application.

### 1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

*Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) is an independent consultancy providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

### 1.4 *Management*

The assessment was carried out under the overall direction of **Jonathan Hunn** BA PHD MIFA, an established archaeologist with extensive experience in managing archaeological projects in England. Jonathan holds a first degree in Archaeology and History from the University College of North Wales (Bangor), and a PhD from the University of Southampton. Jonathan has held managerial posts with *English Heritage*, *Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust*, *Oxford Archaeological Unit* and *Tempvs Reparatvm Ltd*, and has acted as archaeological consultant for *Hertfordshire County Council* and *English Heritage*.

## 1.5 **Site Location**

The site is located in the borough of Dacorum, within the civil parish of Berkhamsted, centred on NGR SP 9750 0788 (Fig. 1). It lies on the west side of Berkhamsted, covering an area of 14.2ha, bounded by Shootersway to the south, Durrants Lane to the west, and modern urban residential development to the east (Fig. 2). The letters A-F on the plan refer to the identification of the main site subdivisions by the clients (Fig. 2).

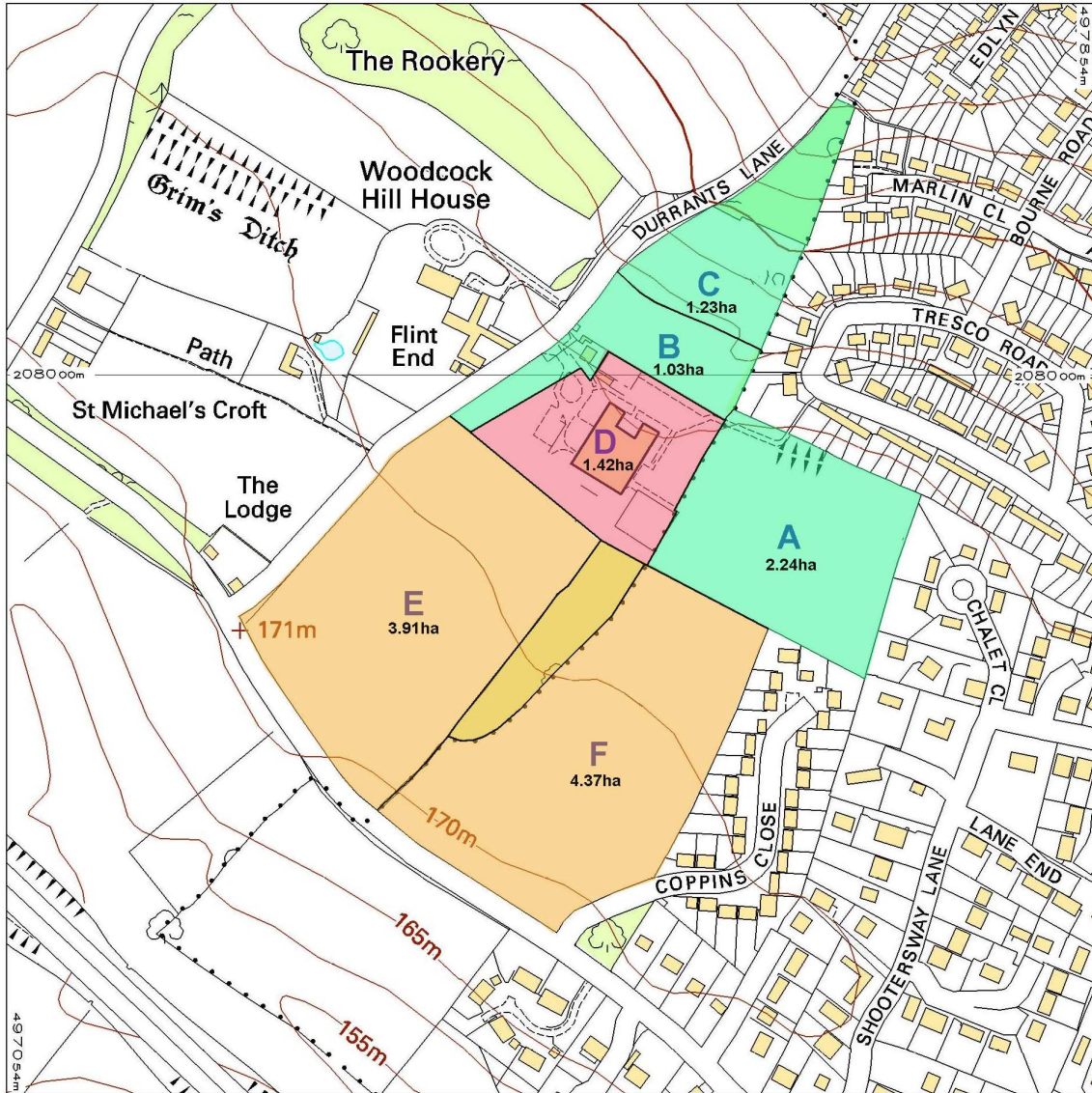
A detailed description of the site appears in Section 4 of this report.

## 1.4 **Geology & Topography**

The site lies partly on the plateau and upper slope overlooking the Bulbourne, which lies c.0.5 km to the north, flowing in an easterly direction towards the river Colne. The land falls from 170m AOD at the south side of the site to 135m AOD at its north extremity, though much of the site is more or less level, the steepest part being at the north end.

Most of the soils in the site area are derived from plateau drift (loamy clay with flints and pebbles), which in turn overlie the Upper Chalk (Avery 1964, 61; Hodge *et al* 1984, 111), and are classified as belonging to the Batcombe Series. This is a '*gleyed brown earth*' which is a '*flinty silt loam or loam, locally clay loam*'. The sub-soils consist of a '*yellow-brown, friable and normally flinty, passing to stiff yellow-red mottled clay*' (Avery 1964, map sheet 238). On the slopes of the site the soils belong to the Winchester Series, which are derived from '*Clay with flints over chalk*'. The surface texture is '*flinty or pebbly clay loam or loam, locally clay*'. The drainage is classified as 'free' and the subsoil is described as '*brown, friable and flinty or pebbly, generally becoming stiffer and redder with depth, but locally passing to loose gravel*' (*ibid.*). The land is classified as Grade 3 according to the *Agricultural land classification of England & Wales* (MAFF 1971, sheet 159).





**Figure 2:** Site location, landholdings, subdivisions and areas (scale 1:5,000)

Green	Areas A, B, C	Hertfordshire County Council
Pink	Area D	Edgerton-Rothesay School
Buff	Areas E, F	Taylor Wimpey Developments Ltd



## **2. Aims & Methods**

- 2.1 'Archaeological desk-based assessment is an assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area, consisting of a collation of existing information in order to identify the likely extent, character and quality of the known or potential archaeological resource, in order that appropriate measures might be considered' (IFA 2000).
- 2.2 The assessment was carried out according to a standard method statement (Appendix 1), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 2001).
- 2.3 The following readily available sources of information were consulted for the desk-based assessment:
  - 2.3.1 *Archaeological Databases*

Archaeological databases represent the standard references to the known archaeology of an area. The principal source consulted was the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), Hertford. The study area employed in the HER search includes the site itself, and a surrounding study area of approximately 1km radius.
  - 2.3.2 *Historic Documents*

Documentary research provides an overview of the history of a site and its environs, suggesting the effects of settlement and land-use patterns. The principal source consulted was the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies library (HALS) at Hertford.
  - 2.3.3 *Cartographic & Pictorial Documents*

Old maps and illustrations are normally a very productive area of research. The principal sources consulted were HALS and Berkhamsted Library.
  - 2.3.4 *Air Photographs*

Given favourable light and crop conditions, air photographs can reveal buried features in the form of crop and soil marks. They can also provide an overview of and more specific information about land use at a given time. The principal source consulted was HALS.
  - 2.3.5 *Geotechnical Information*

A description of the topography and solid and surface geology of the site and its environs was compiled, so as to appreciate the potential condition of any archaeological remains, to assess the hydrological conditions, and to appraise the potential for the survival of buried waterlogged archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits.
  - 2.3.6 *Secondary & Statutory Sources*

The principal source consulted was the Extensive Urban Survey of Berkhamsted (Thompson & Bryant 2005). The author's own notes on Berkhamsted were also used.

## 2.4 ***Walkover Survey***

As part of the assessment a walkover survey of the site was undertaken on October 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, with the following aims:

- To examine any areas of archaeological potential identified during research for the assessment, in particular with a view to gauging the possible survival or condition of any remains present.
- To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.
- To assess the present site use and ground conditions, with a view to the appropriate deployment of fieldwork techniques, if required by the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority.

### 3. Archaeological & Historical Evidence

- 3.1 The local and regional settings of archaeological sites are factors that are taken into consideration when assessing the planning implications of development proposals. The following sections provide a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs.

The study area lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and the site has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods. The locations of known archaeological and historical sites recorded in the HER are shown in Fig. 3, and details appear in Section 9.

#### 3.2 *Archaeological & Historical Background to the Study Area*

##### 3.2.1 *Prehistoric (before 600BC)*

Evidence for this period in the Berkhamsted area is limited to a small number of isolated finds. A Neolithic axe head was recovered on the edge of the plateau c.1km to the north of the assessment site (HER 4252), and several unprovenanced early prehistoric flint artefacts have been found west of Berkhamstead, at Meadway in Northchurch and to the north, on Berkhamsted Common. At Oakwood, c.500m to the south east of the site, a quantity of struck flint flakes were found (HER 11479) suggesting Neolithic/Bronze Age activity in the area.

A late Bronze Age brooch is recorded c.2km to the east of the site at Berkhamsted Castle (HER 4251). The closest prehistoric activity to the assessment site is recorded at Oakwood (see above), where evidence of late Bronze Age/early Iron Age activity was revealed, including two circular buildings, eight four-post structures and a fence line. A small quantity of pottery including a carinated bowl (Long Wittenham style) and flint tempered LBA/EIA pottery was found on the site, along with triangular loom weight fragments.

##### 3.2.2 *Iron Age (600BC-AD43)*

A number of Iron Age artefacts have also been found in the area. Gold *staters* (coins) have been recorded south-east of the site at Ashlyns (HER 4856) and Meadway (HER 6070). A bronze coin of Addedomaros was found in Lower King's Road (HER 6075), c.1.5 km east of the site, and an Iron Age brooch is recorded from Berkhamsted Castle (HER 0178), c.2km east of the site. A number of Iron Age coins have also been recorded from the town centre. There is evidence for late Iron Age iron smelting at Dellfield (HER 4904), c.1.25 km north of the site.

The principal upstanding prehistoric monument in the assessment area, generally believed to be of Iron Age date, is the linear earthwork known as *Grim's Ditch* or *Grym's Dyke* (HER 2022, 2023). This comprises a bank and ditch with an average overall width of between 15 and 20m, running for some distance through the Chilterns. The monument is by no means continuous, though to what extent this is due to later changes in land use or to deliberate omission (where ancient woodland existed) is difficult to determine. The most

recent appraisal of the monument was undertaken by Thorn & Wade (1997). This report covers the Berkhamsted section up to the eastern boundary of the school grounds. A 150m length of this feature survives c.200m west of the site, and is a scheduled ancient monument. The projected route of *Grim's Ditch* crosses the assessment site, and a smaller unscheduled length is recorded by the Ordnance Survey on the east part of the site (below: Fig. 2).

### 3.2.3 Roman (AD43-c.450)

During the Roman period the Berkhamsted area formed part of the *civitas* (tribal area) of the *Catuvellauni*, with its capital at *Verulamium* (St Albans) (Branigan 1987, 135-6). During this period there is evidence for dispersed occupation along the length of the upper Bulbourne valley (Morris & Wainwright 1995, 68-75), but the principal settlement in the area appears to have been at Cow Roast, c.4km northwest of the site, where excavations have revealed significant evidence of occupation and industry, mainly metalworking (Zeepvat 1997). An important Roman road, now known as *Akeman Street*, passed through the valley and linked *Verulamium* with *Corinium* (Cirencester). The road followed a similar course to the former A41 (now the A4251), c.400m north of the site.

The closest Roman occupation site was situated in Northchurch, about 1.4km north of the assessment site (Thompson & Bryant 2005, fig. 1). Others are recorded to the north and west of the town (HER 2716, 6421, 6437). Roman buildings, possibly part of a single villa site, have been identified at Dudswell Rise and Boswick Lane, Northchurch. Another possible Roman site was identified on the High Street (HER 7369). There is further evidence for iron working in the form of shaft furnaces at Dellfield, c.1.2 km north of the site (HER 4904), and a pottery kiln is recorded in Bridgewater Road (HER 6083). A concentration of pottery further along Bridgewater Road (HER 6071) may indicate the presence of a second kiln.

The remaining evidence for Roman activity in the area comprises random coin loss. Several Roman coins have been found at the castle (HER 1336), and coins have been recovered from Meadway (HER 6070), Dellfield (HER 6076), and Swingate Lane (HER 6080).

### 3.2.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

The town of Great Berkhamsted, to give its formal title, is known to have been in existence in the late Anglo-Saxon period, and is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle in 1066 (Garmonsway 1955, 200). Almost a century earlier the name appears in the Will of Aelgifu in his bequest of lands (Sawyer 1968, 415, 1484).

The location of the Anglo-Saxon settlement has never been precisely defined. The earliest physical evidence survives in the form of architectural detail in the church of St Mary, 'North Berkhamsted', i.e. the 'North church' (HER 4447; Smith 1973, 11). In addition, Northchurch was a rectory manor and may have been a minster church (Doggett & Hunn 1985, 22). A quantity of early/middle Saxon pottery has been recorded south of the site at Chesham Road, suggesting that a settlement had been established by the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century (Hunn 2000).



### 3.2.5 Medieval (1066-1500)

Berkhamsted is mentioned in the Domesday survey (1086) where it is recorded as *Berchehastede* (Morris 1976, 15.1). It is described as a *burhium* (borough) whose burgesses paid £4 from tolls and held half a hide of land. The number of burgesses is recorded as fifty-two, although this has been questioned (Doggett & Hunn 1985, 22).

Berkhamsted Castle was probably built in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, following the Norman Conquest (Remfry 1998). The castle is not mentioned directly in Domesday, but there is a reference to a '*fossarius*' or ditcher, who was in effect an overseer or engineer responsible for the excavation of the defensive ditches and moats (Morris 1976, 15.1). At that time the castle belonged to the Count of Mortain, William the Conqueror's half brother. It became Crown property following the Count's abortive insurrection in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, it developed from a simple motte and bailey castle into a substantial concentrically defended seat of royal authority. The castle remained a royal residence until 1495 when the Countess Cecily died there.

The precise limits of the medieval borough have never been satisfactorily established. It is possible that the late Anglo-Saxon '*burh*' lay towards what is now called Northchurch. However, there is a mention of land called '*Oldeburgh*' in the vicinity of the old Post Office on the High Street, which might also indicate an earlier settlement focus. According to the *Extensive Urban Survey Project* (Thompson & Bryant 2005) the core of the town was in existence by the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century and was centred along the axis of Akeman Street to the west and east of St Peters Church, and possibly to the north along Castle Street towards the castle. It comprised the High Street, a market place (now occupied by development backing onto Back Lane), Castle Street, Water Lane and Mill Street, Raven's Lane and Chesham Road (formerly Elvenway).

On present evidence it seems that Berkhamsted developed in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries as an undefended trading centre on an important highway. This is similar to the development of such places as Baldock and Royston (Herts) and Amersham and Stony Stratford (Bucks). There is no evidence that the town was ever defended, at least in the formal sense of the word, though it is possible that it was at least physically defined at some point in its history. A grant of land in c.1225 mentions a *magnum fossatum*, or 'great ditch' (Jenkins 1955, 47, 334). This recalls a similar reference to the '*Tonman ditch*', also known as the '*Monk's ditch*' (Hunn 1981, 2), which defined St Albans in the 13/14<sup>th</sup> century, and it is possible that Berkhamsted was similarly defined at this time.

It is not known when the township's market was first established, but the Domesday evidence suggests a pre-Conquest date (Doggett & Hunn 1985, 27-28). Topographical and documentary evidence indicates that the market lay to the west of St Peter's Church, in the area now known as Middle Row, lying between the High Street to the south and Back Lane to the north.

In the wider landscape the basic pattern of land use had been created by the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century (Roden 1965, 217-8). Interestingly, there is mention of the riverside meadows being liable to severe flooding, resulting in the deposition of stones on their surface (*ibid.*). On the upper slopes of the valley in the

vicinity of Durrants Lane, *Salmons Field* had become a single arable unit by the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Roden 1965, 224). By the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century this had been divided into *North* and *South Salmons Field*, but thereafter there was a slow but progressive subdivision of these fields (*ibid.*).

### 3.2.6 *Post-Medieval (1500-1900)*

The development of the town was driven by the needs of a growing population. While the basic infrastructure was retained there was growth away from the main thoroughfare of the town along the various side roads that developed during this period. In 1524, 129 taxpayers were recorded in the two parishes comprising Berkhamsted and Northchurch (NA: E.179 120/19). In 1563 there were 183 families recorded for the same area. In 1676 there were 831 adults over the age of 16 (Munby 1964). At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a population of 522 families, made up of 2,425 individuals. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the population had reached 4778, and by the end of the century in 1901 the figure stood at 8055 (Page 1914, 236).

It is not altogether clear what was happening to the manorial system in Berkhamsted, but it seems that changes were occurring in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest reference to the name 'Durrants' occurs in a court roll of 1495 (Page 1908, 248). Durrants was a parcel of the Honour of Berkhamsted (*i.e.* it formed part of the manorial holding) together with Northcott and Magdalens (Marlins). However, both these places were manors as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Page 1908, 246). The earliest reference to Durrants as a capital messuage occurs in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. (Norden 1607, 17). According to Roden (1965, 229) it consisted of *c.*36¾ acres of arable, with 9½ acres of meadow, 4 tenements, 2 cottages, 1 house and 2 orchards. There were 23 individual tenants with holdings ranging from ½ an acre to 7 acres. The principal fields were *Hibberds field* (12.25 acres), *Lagley field* (6 acres), *Twelve Acres* (13.5 acres) and *Home field* (5 acres). One-third of the arable land was held as 'common arable'. At this time Durrants was held by Henry Seare; it subsequently came into possession of John Cock and then his sister Anne Partridge. After that it was left to William Cock of Barley whose son, also William, sold it to Thomas Egerton in 1739.

Various deeds for Durrants in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (HALS: 29556, 29558, 29643, 29699 and AH/262-73) and a list of rents in 1790 (HALS: 29713) suggest that the formative period of the holding predated the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the holding of Durrants Farm (or the Northchurch Estate) amounted to 178 acres and is shown as extending from the Grand Junction Canal in the valley to the north end of the application area (Fig. 5). The earliest detailed map covering the assessment site is the Tithe Apportionment map of 1839 (Fig. 6). By this time all vestiges of the former open field systems, apart from the survival of field names, had disappeared. The dominant landowners were still the Duchy of Cornwall and the Bridgewater estate, though there were a number of other substantial land holdings in the area such as Ashlyns, Harefoot and Rossway. This pattern persisted throughout the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were only occasional references to the ownership of Woodcock Hill and Durrants. Woodcock Hill was purchased in 1840 by John Field, and was completely rebuilt eight years later by Frank Moore (Hosier 1994, 44). In

addition to Moore, who was listed simply as 'landed proprietor and land holder', four other households were recorded there (Goose 1996, 203). Moore is again recorded in connection with Woodcock Hill in Kelly's Directory of 1862 and 1869. According to the 1874 edition of Kelly's, Durrants Farm was held by Joseph Mead. The character of area in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was broadly similar to that of the first half, with a preference for boundaries aligned at right angles to the Bulbourne (Figs 7 & 8).

The north side of the town was radically altered by the construction of the Grand Junction Canal in 1798 (Faulkner 1987, 6). The London to Birmingham Railway was constructed in 1836-7 (Cockman 1983, 9), cutting through the natural marshy area between the castle and the High Street. A railway station was built in 1875 a short distance to the north of the Castle Mill site, replacing the first station just to the east of Castle Street (Hastie 1999, 32).

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a major increase in the growth of the town (Hastie 1999, 67-73). Gas was first used in Berkhamsted in 1849; the gas works were located in Water Lane. They were moved to Billet Lane in 1906 and closed in 1959 (*ibid.*). Piped water was introduced in 1864: the water was obtained from a borehole in the town and pumped to reservoirs on Kingshill and Green Lane. Mains drainage was laid in 1898, and a telephone company was established. A proposal for the provision of electricity in the same year was rejected and it was not until the 1920s that a supply was established (*ibid.*).

### 3.2.7 *Modern (1900-present)*

At the beginning of the century new dwellings were constructed along Shrublands Road, Cross Oak Road and Queens Road (Hastie 1999, 67-73). The First World War brought about a decline in population between 1911 and 1921. Council houses first appeared in the 1920s in Swing Gate Lane and Gossams End. Between the wars (1919-39) development began on extensions to Ashlyns Road, Greenway, George Street, Shrublands Road, West Road, Anglefield, Kingsdale and Crossways. Some three hundred council houses were built on the Durrants estate in the late 1940s and early 1950s (de Lisle 2007, 32-33). By 1960 the population had reached about 12,000, excluding Northchurch, and by the end of the century it stood at just under 20,000.

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the area in the vicinity of Woodcock Hill remained broadly unchanged. In 1911 Woodcock Hill was owned by Robert McVitie (IR2 57/1 no.170). At that date he held 82.3 acres (Fig. 8), but it is clear from sale particulars that the Woodcock Hill estate consisted of 228 acres by *c.*1919. Durrants Lane was gated up to *c.*1914 (Hosier 1994, 43). By 1924 Shootersway Lane had been created to provide access for private residential development (Fig. 10). This remained very much the same until after 1945 when council housing began to develop on the southern margins of the proposed development area (Figs 11 & 12).

### 3.3 *The Known Archaeology & History of the Site*

#### 3.3.1 *Prehistoric (before 600BC)*

There is no information relating to this period within the assessment site.

#### 3.3.2 *Iron Age (600BC-AD43)*

As previously noted, the projected course of *Grim's Ditch* crosses the site from west to east, to the immediate north of the school, passing through Area B. Current Ordnance Survey mapping shows a surviving section of this feature, c.40m in length, on the north side of Area A. This is also recorded in the HER (HER 2023), and described in the walkover survey (below, Section 4.1).

#### 3.3.3 *Roman (AD43-c.450)*

There is no information relating to this period within the area of the proposed development.

#### 3.3.4 *Saxon (c.450-1066)*

There is no information relating to this period within the area of the proposed development.

#### 3.3.5 *Medieval (1066-1500)*

There is no information relating to this period within the area of the proposed development.

#### 3.3.6 *Post-Medieval (1500-1900)*

There is no recorded archaeology of this period within the assessment site.

The earliest cartographic depiction of the site in any detail appears on Dury & Andrews' county map of 1766 (Fig. 4). Shootersway and Durrant's Lane are shown, the latter with a pronounced dogleg adjacent to Woodcock Hill. The area of the assessment site appears as open fields, though a precise correlation is not possible because the field boundaries have been somewhat simplified.

A plan of the Northchurch estate, dated 1808, provides greater detail of the north end of the site (Areas B & C). This falls within two fields, *Middle Close* and *Upper Close*, and contains a wooded area, *Cocks Dell Spinney* (Fig. 5). South of Upper Close is a narrow strip field, *Spurs Pightle*, corresponding to the line of Grim's Ditch and suggesting that this feature survived in the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century landscape.

The whole of the assessment site is shown some thirty years later on the Berkhamsted Tithe map of 1839 (Fig. 6). The features described above are shown, while the south part of the site consists of two large fields, *The Paddocks* (Area E) and *Great Hippards* (Area F), with a smaller enclosure, *Little Hippards*, in the south of Area F. At the junction of these three fields is a small copse. The easternmost part of the assessment site extends into a field called *Middle Lagley*.

The First and Second Edition Ordnance Survey 25" sheets of 1878 and 1898 (Figs 7 & 8) present a picture of the site that has changed little. Great and Little Hippards have been amalgamated to form a single large enclosure. The dogleg in Durrants Lane opposite Woodcock Hill has been bypassed to



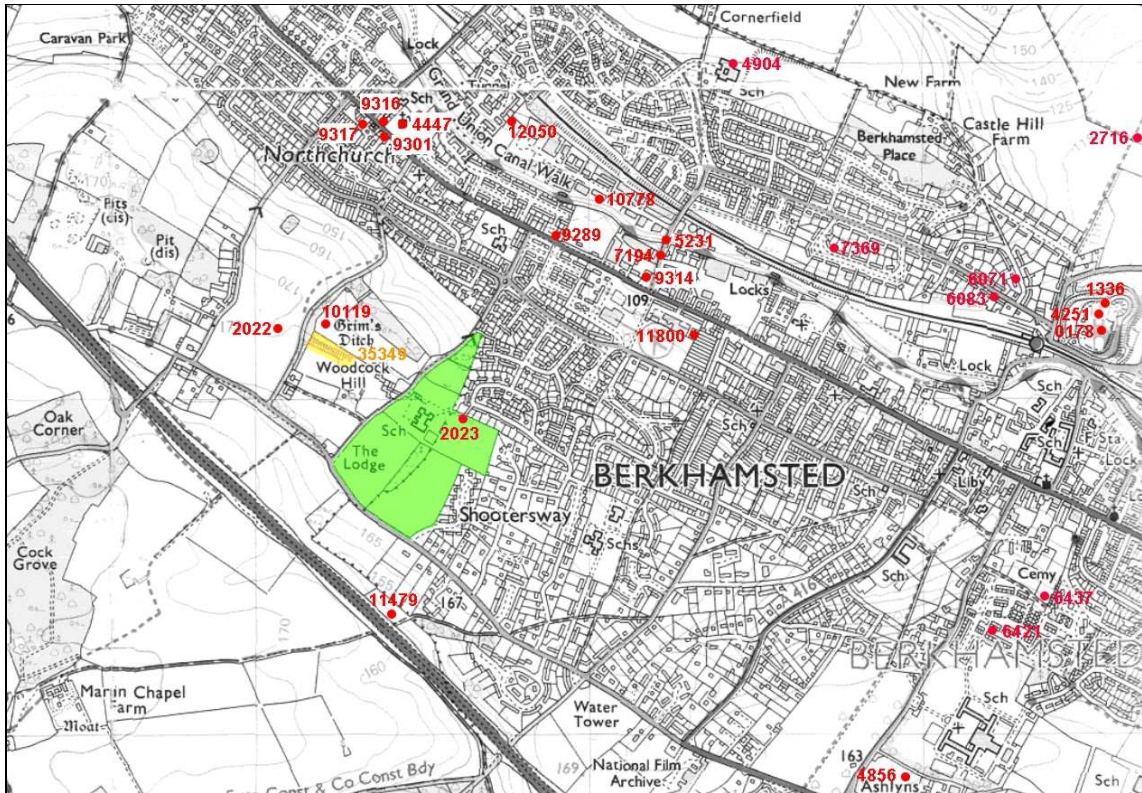
facilitate expansion of the latter, comprising ranges of new farm buildings. *Spurs Pightle* is no longer shown, though its southern boundary remains marking the alignment of Grim's Ditch. *Cox [sic] Dell* is shown as a spinney covering an old chalk pit, skirted by a pronounced reverse curve in Durrants Lane. On the 1898 sheet the long narrow plantation separating *The Paddocks* and *Great Hippards* appears for the first time. At the junction of Shootersway and Durrants Lane, a lodge had been established by 1898, indicating that Durrants Lane was essentially a private access road to Woodcock Hill at that time.

### 3.3.7 *Modern* (1900-present)

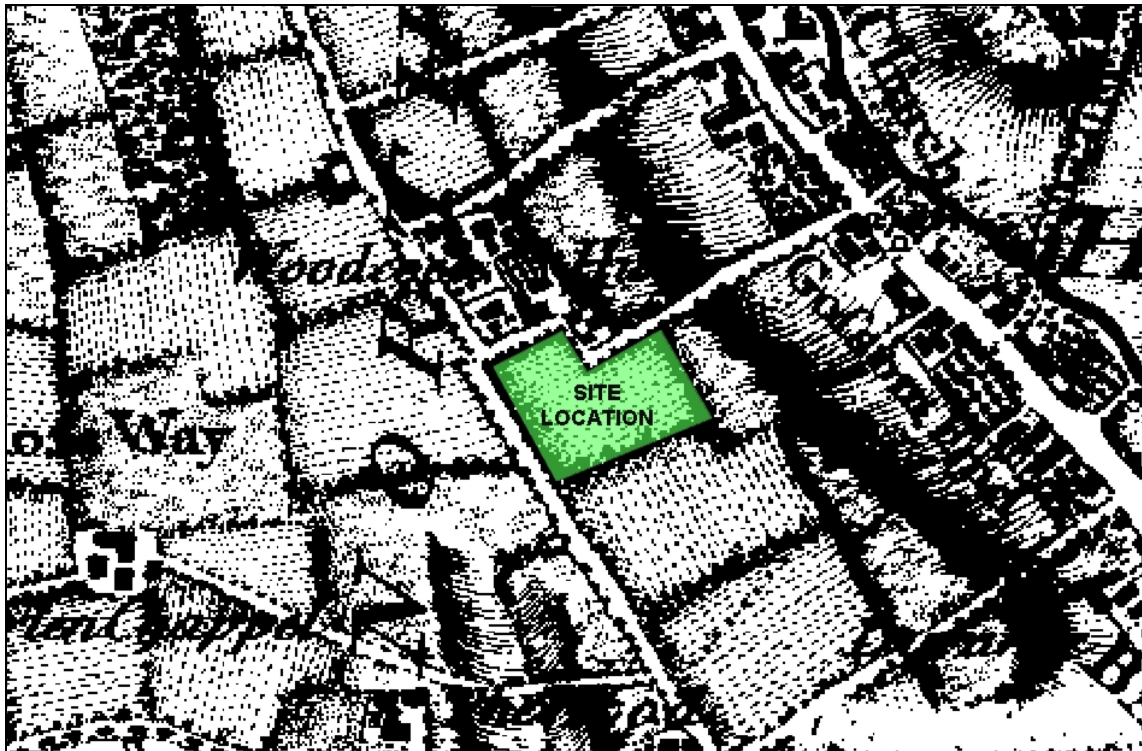
In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the assessment site formed the southern half of the estate belonging to Woodcock Hill, as shown on the Tax Assessment map of 1911, prepared by the Inland Revenue (Fig. 9).

The Third Edition Ordnance Survey 25" sheet of 1924 (Fig. 10) shows relatively little change from earlier editions. At the northern end of the site, the eastern boundary of Areas B and C has been formalised, and Area B is covered with trees, evidently a plantation of conifers. Smaller plantations are also shown at the north end and south corner of *Hippards*, and the west corner of *The Paddocks*. The subsequent Ordnance Survey edition of 1940 presents a similar picture (Fig. 11).

The suburban area of Berkhamsted expanded up to the borders of the assessment site in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 12). No development other than agricultural structures appears to have taken place on the site until c.1970 when the Thomas Bourne School, now Egerton-Rothesay, was constructed. It opened in 1971 (Hastie 1999, 114). Probably at the same time, woodland in Cox Dell was cleared, and the opportunity was taken to ease the sharp reverse curve at that point in Durrants Lane. Subsequent development has seen the construction of Coppins Close across the south corner of the assessment site.



**Figure 3:** Archaeological sites in the Hertfordshire HER (*not to scale*).  
(*yellow = scheduled ancient monument: green = assessment site*)

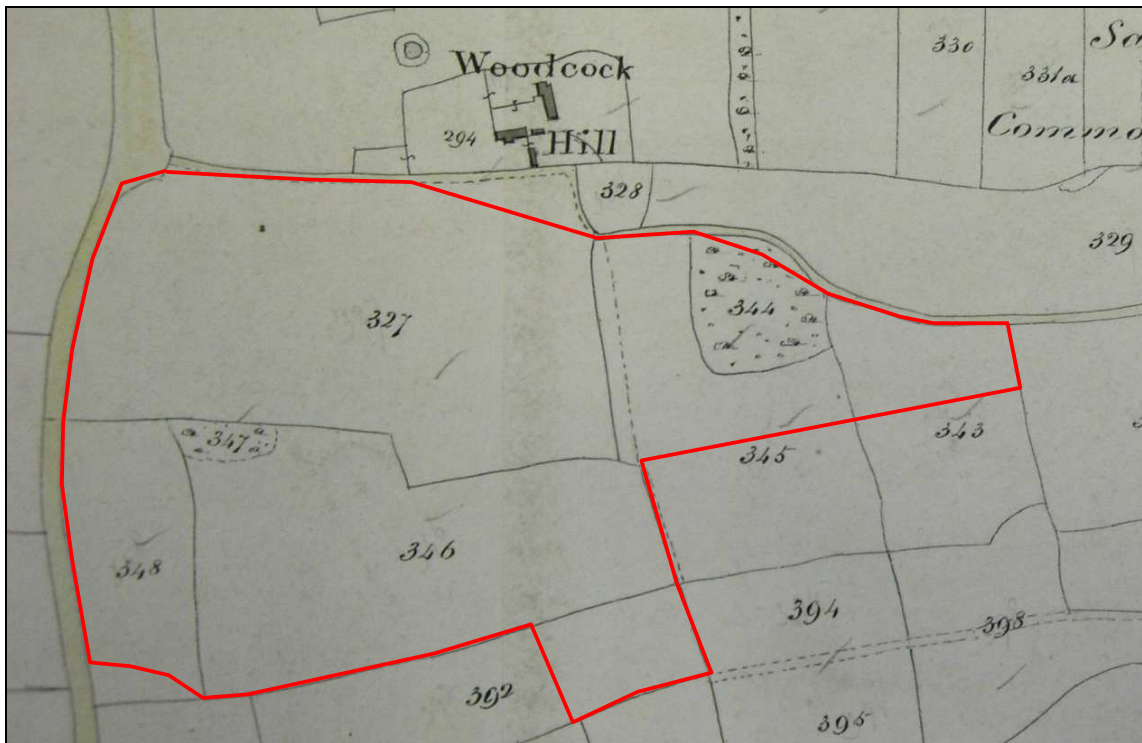


**Figure 4:** Extract from Dury & Andrews' Map of Hertfordshire, 1766  
(*approximate site location only*)

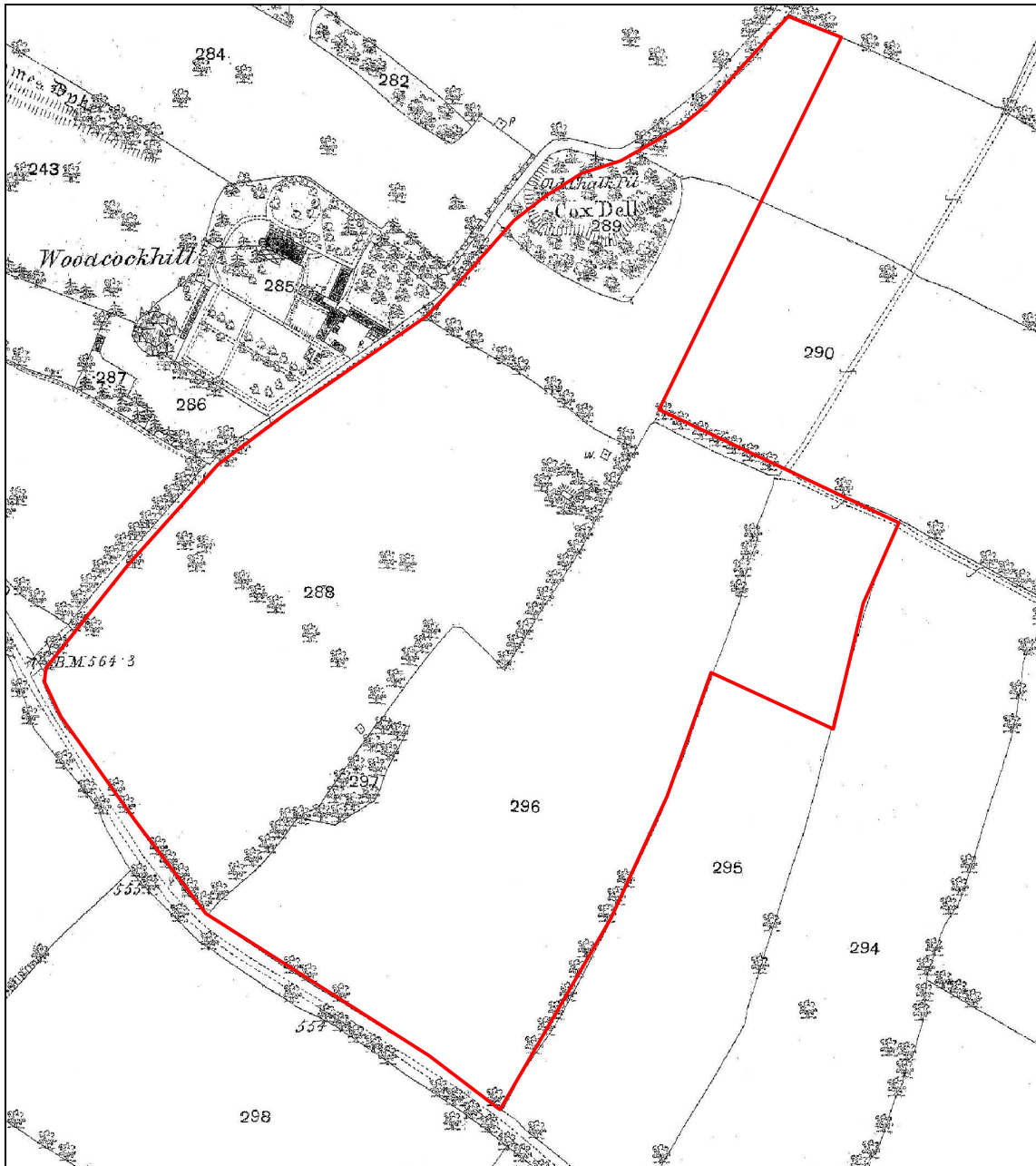




**Figure 5:** Extract from plan of Northchurch estate, 1808  
(Note that this covers only the northern part of the site)



**Figure 6:** Extract from Berkhamsted Tithe map, 1839  
Key to field names: 327 = The Paddocks; 343 = Middle Close; 344 = Cox's Dell Wood;  
345 = Upper Close; 346 = Great Hippards; 348 = Little Hippards; 392 = Middle Lagley



**Figure 7:** Extract from Ordnance Survey First Edition 25" sheet, 1878



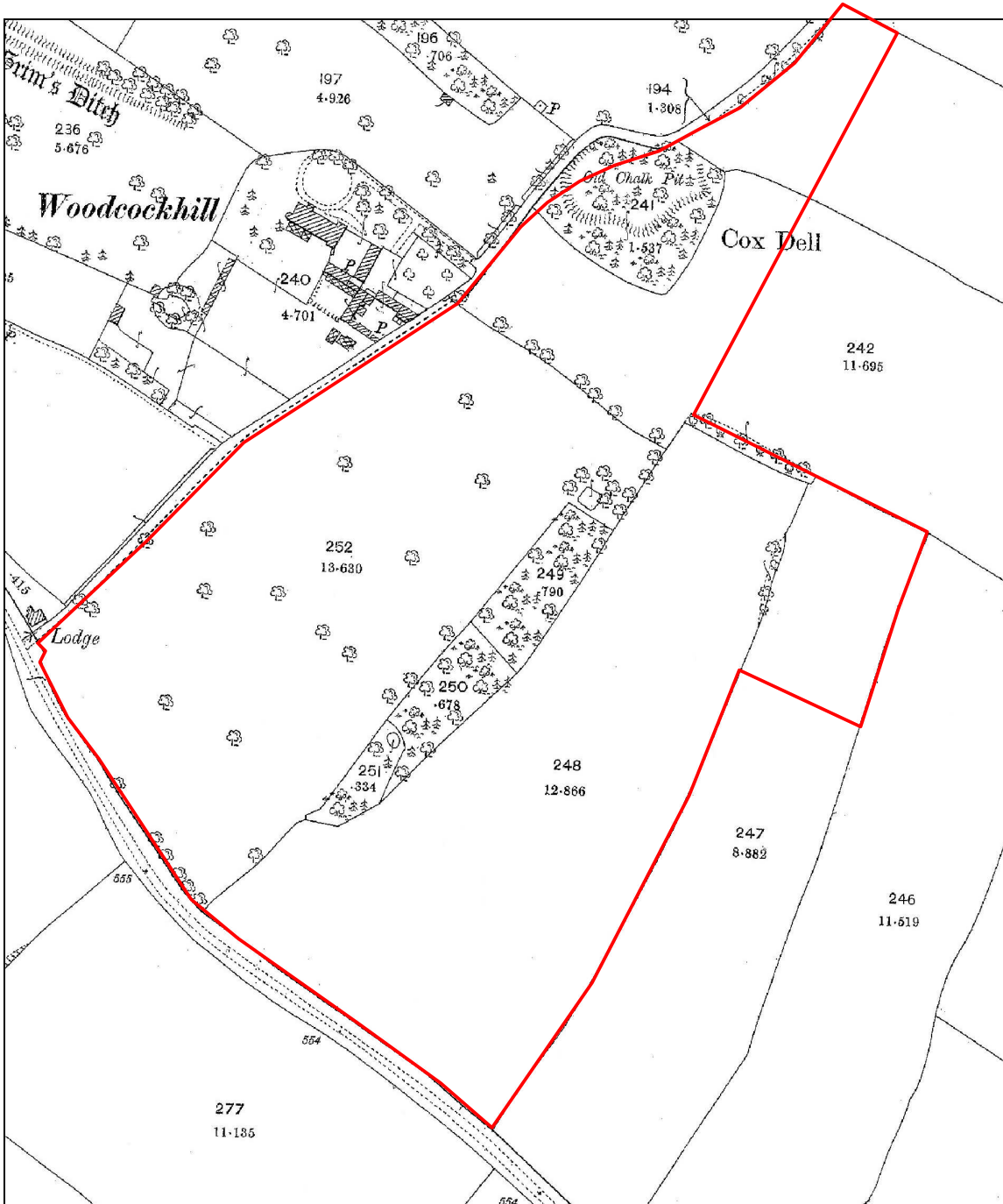


Figure 8: Extract from Ordnance Survey Second Edition 25" sheet, 1898



Figure 9: Extract from Inland Revenue Land Tax map, c.1911

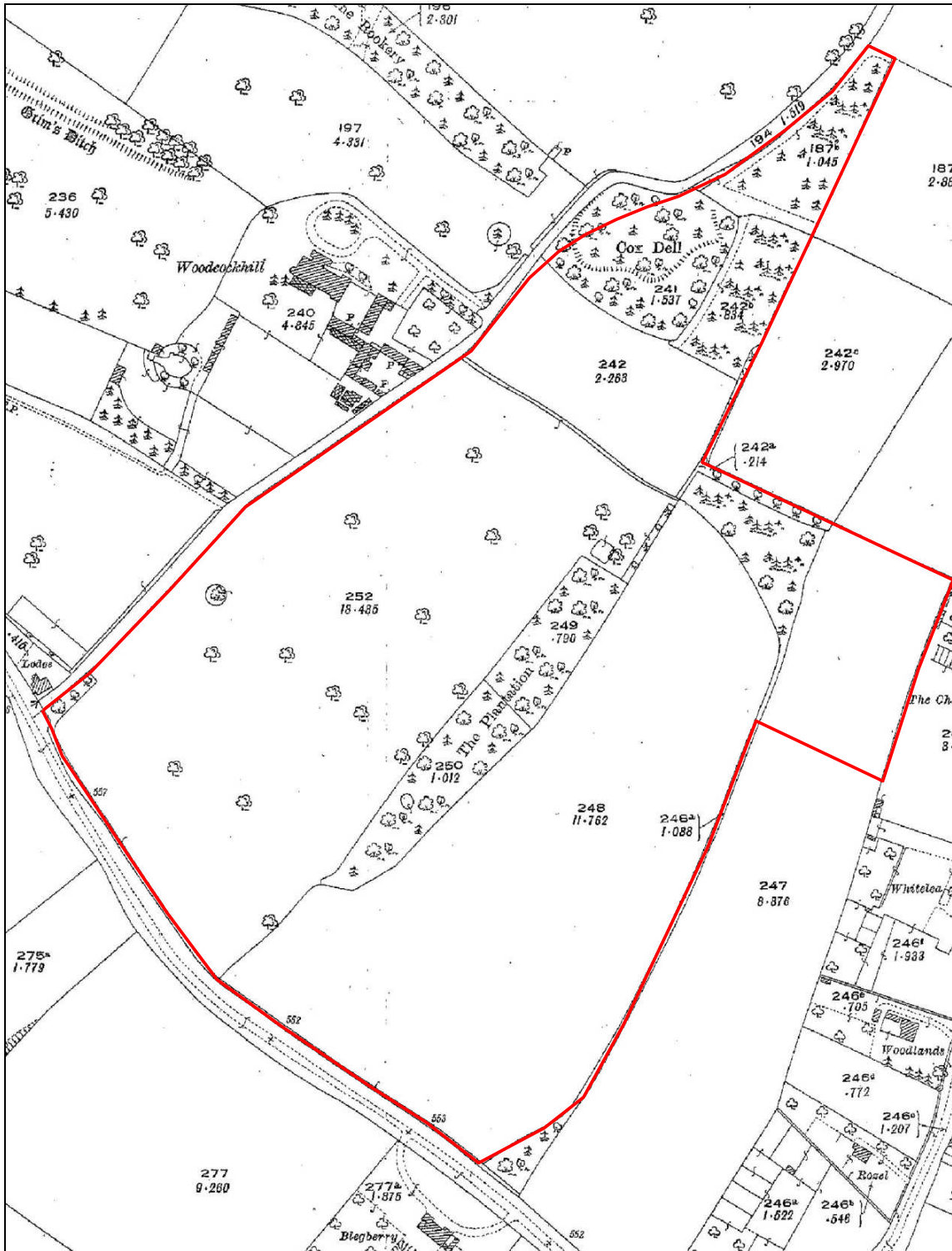


Figure 10: Extract from Ordnance Survey Third Edition 25" sheet, 1924



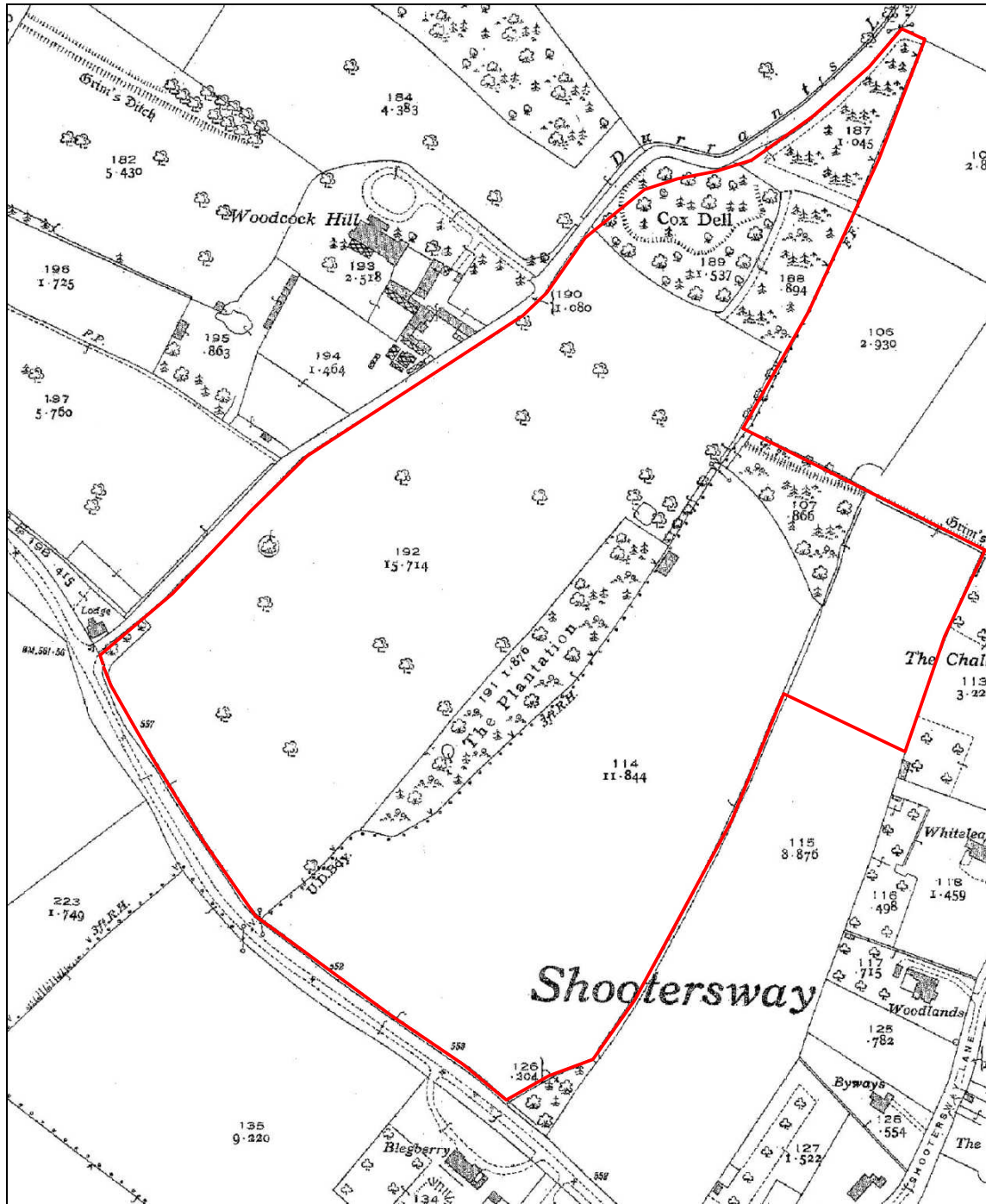


Figure 11: Extract from Ordnance Survey 25" sheet, 1940



Figure 12: Extract from OS 1:10,000 scale mapping, 1960

## 4 Walkover Survey

### 4.1 *Extent, Access & Present Use*

The assessment site is defined by minor roads to the south and west and by residential developments to the east and north. The site (Fig. 2) comprises a range of different land-use areas, including agricultural land (8.28ha), woodland (1.23ha), sports and recreation (3.27ha) and developed land (1.42ha). The only access to the site is from Durrants Lane opposite Woodcock Hill, by a drive that leads to the forecourt of the school premises.

Each land parcel is described in alphabetical order (Figs 2 & 13).

**Area A** (Plate 2) is a flat sports field lying east of the school. It is surrounded on three sides by mostly hedged boundaries with occasional standard deciduous trees belonging to the rear of residential properties. On its western side it lies adjacent to the school premises. Its northern boundary is denoted by a lynchet type feature or escarpment, which drops away to the north. This most probably represents the outer or downhill edge of the original bank of Grims Ditch, with the ditch, on the upside, having been completely filled in.

**Area B** (Plates 9 & 12) This is an L-shaped, mostly grassed area, part of which lies to the south and part to the west of the school premises. The area to the north is a sports area while the western part is landscaped with a light scattering of maple trees. It abuts onto Durrants Lane to the west, woodland to the north and the school premises to the south.

**Area C** (Plates 10, 11) is a triangular area defined by Durrants Lane to the west, modern residential development to the east and Area B to the south. It is an unmanaged area with mainly deciduous trees and scrub but there is also a line of tall larches aligned roughly north-south. It represents a semi wild environment that serves a recreational purpose for the local populace.

**Area D** (Plates 3 & 8) comprises the school premises, consisting of 1960s-type buildings. These have been supplemented on the north side by a series of portable classrooms.

**Area E** (Plates 5-7) is a flat arable field situated at the corner of the junction of Durrants Lane and Shootersway. Of all the areas this is the most visible at least on its western side. It abuts onto the school premises to the north and partly on a wooded 'spring' on its eastern side. There are no obvious physical features within this field.

**Area F** (Plate 4) is a flat arable field lying adjacent to Shootersway on the south, though heavily screened by vegetation, at least in summer. To the east lie the rear gardens of Coppins Close; to the north the school sports field (Area A) and to the west a wooded plantation. There are no obvious physical features within this field.

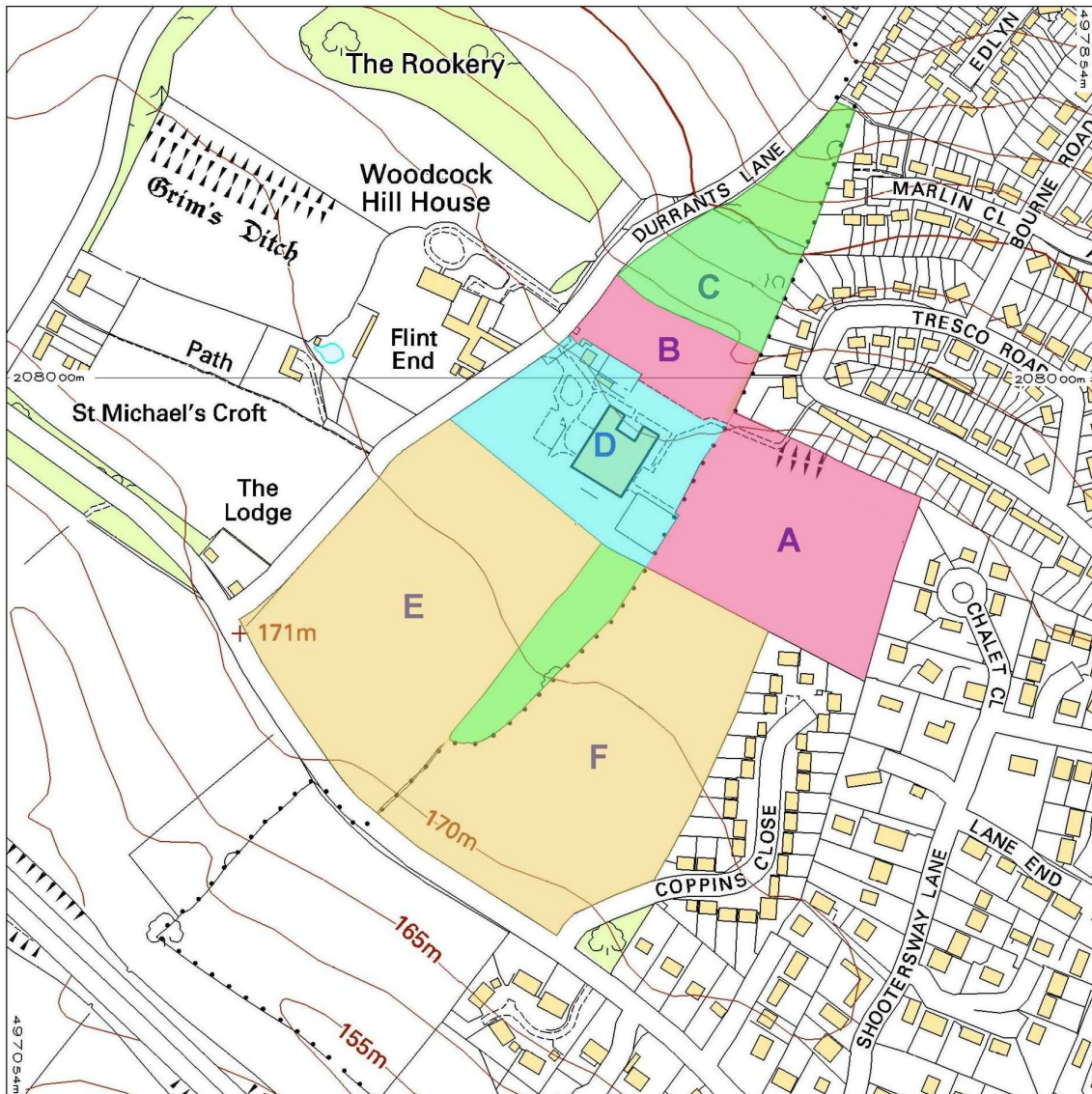
### 4.2 *Buildings*

The only buildings on the site are those on Area D, belonging to the school, which was opened in 1971. These have been supplemented by a variety of temporary classroom units on the north side of the site.



### 4.3 Services

Details of buried services have not been provided by the clients. The only known services crossing the site are those supplying the needs of the school premises.



**Figure 13:** Current land use pattern on the assessment site (scale 1:5,000)

Brown =	Agricultural	Pink =	Sports/recreational
Green =	Woodland	Turquoise =	School premises





**Plate 1:** Looking east along the alignment of Grim's Ditch



**Plate 2:** Area A, looking south



**Plate 3:** Looking west across Area A towards the school



**Plate 4:** Looking north across Area F



**Plate 5:** South-west corner of Area E, looking west towards The Lodge



**Plate 6:** Looking north across Area E to Woodcock Hill



**Plate 7:** Area E, looking south to Shootersway



**Plate 8:** Area D and the school, looking east



**Plate 9:** Area B, looking south



**Plate 10:** Durrants Lane, looking north-east  
(Area C to right)



**Plate 11:** Area C, east side, looking north



**Plate 12:** Area B, north side, looking west



## **5 Statutory Constraints on Development**

5.1 There is a range of planning constraints that may be present on any given site. These constraints may relate both to the area as a whole, and to individual buildings and sites. These constraints are taken into consideration when assessing the implications of planning and other proposals made to the local authority and to other local and national bodies.

### **5.2 *Conservation Areas***

The proposed development does not lie within or adjacent to a Conservation Area. The site is located to the north of the Chilterns Area of Natural Beauty (AONB). This area is referred to as Zone P6 in the Draft Management Plan prepared for the Chilterns Standing Conference (Woolerton Truscott 1993). However, the construction of the A41 dual carriageway road to the south and the judicious use of planting reduces the significance of this aspect.

### **5.3 *Areas of Archaeological Significance***

An Area of Archaeological Significance (DAC 22) runs along the course of Grim's Ditch. It starts at the back of Chalet Close, at the eastern edge of the playing field and extends all across the site in a westerly direction. It is about 170m wide and lies on either side of Grim's Ditch. It begins some 90m NE of the main school block and 35m SW of it.

### **5.4 *Scheduled Ancient Monuments***

There are no Scheduled Monuments within or adjacent to the site. A section of Grim's Ditch at Woodcock Hill, some 200m to the west of the site, is scheduled (Fig. 3). The continuation of this monument, albeit in an almost invisible state, does exist within the footprint of the site and is noted in the Historic Environment Record (HER 2023).

### **5.5 *Listed Buildings***

There are no listed buildings either within or adjacent to the site.

## 6 Conclusions

- 6.1 On the basis of information obtained from the HER and other sources, it is apparent that the assessment site is located within an area containing evidence of activity of prehistoric and Roman date. The Bulbourne valley appears to have provided one of the main historic routes through the Chilterns, linking the London basin with the claylands of the Vale of Aylesbury and beyond. This is particularly apparent in the Roman period, with the establishment of Akeman Street, the accompanying settlement at Cow Roast, and evidence of farming and industrial activities in the valley. Prehistoric activity tends to be confined to the higher plateaux overlooking the valley. Areas E and F of the assessment site form a part of this plateau area, though there is no recorded evidence for prehistoric activity on this part of the site.
- 6.2 The HER records one archaeological feature within the assessment site. This is Grim's Ditch, a linear boundary of probable Iron Age date, the course of which crosses the site on an approximately west-east alignment, following the north boundaries of Areas D and A (Fig. 15). Although the HER and the Ordnance Survey note the existence of a surviving length of this monument in the north corner of Area A, nothing was visible in the walkover survey. However, it is possible that the feature survives, albeit levelled and truncated, within the aforementioned areas of the assessment site.
- 6.3 Settlement at Northchurch and Berkhamsted was probably established in the late Saxon period. While the precise location and extent of these early settlements is not known with any certainty, they were almost certainly confined to the valley, and did not extend to the assessment site. It is likely that the site and surrounding area remained as undeveloped land, with any disturbance limited to agricultural activity, until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the school was built. The sole exception to this is the evidence for chalk extraction in the pit at Cox Dell in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and possibly earlier), which was limited in area.
- 6.4 *Archaeological Potential of the Site*

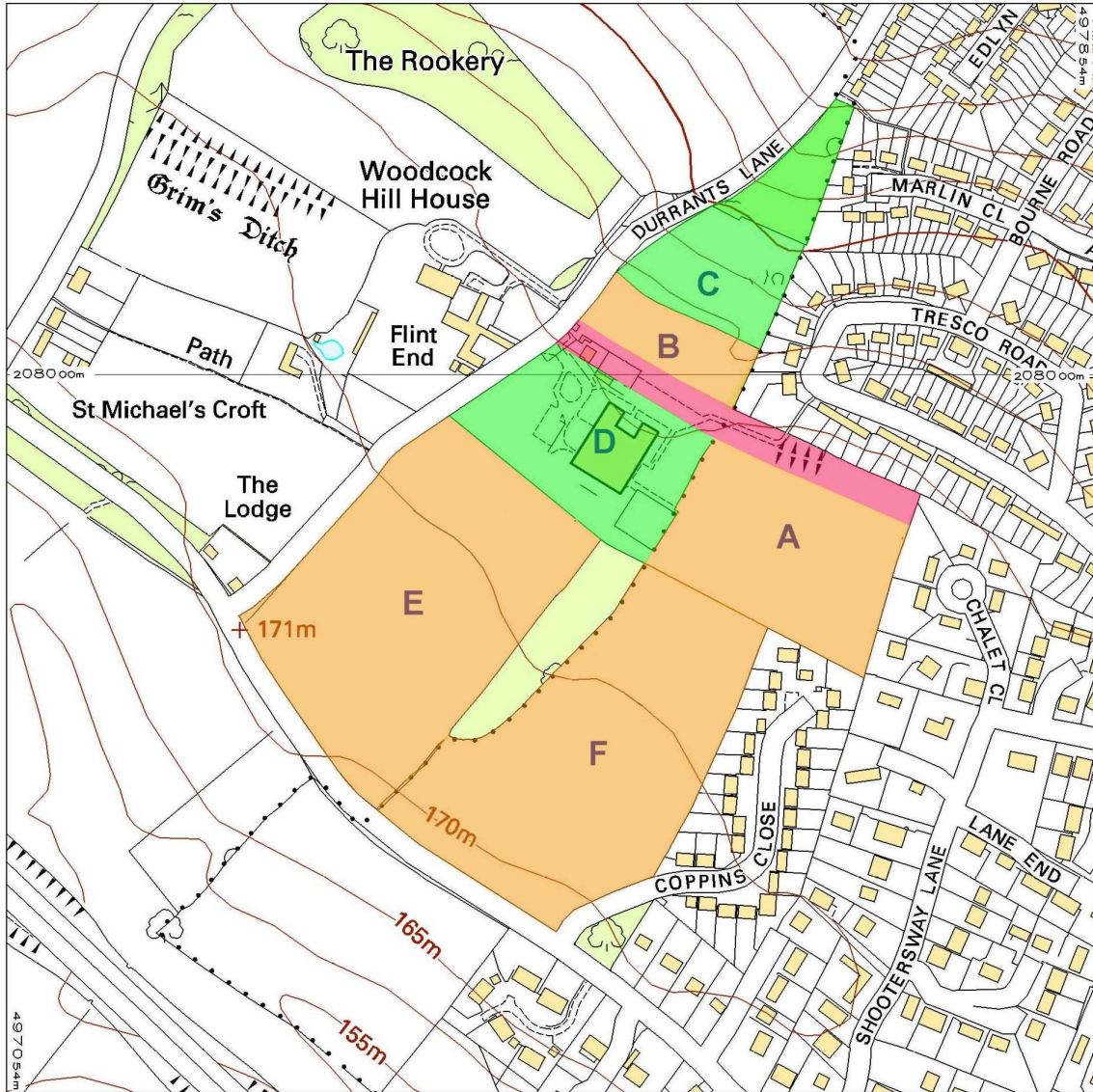
This is perhaps best discussed in relation to the six development areas of the site, identified by the clients.

**Area A:** The north side of this area contains the projected alignment of Grim's Ditch, and is therefore assigned a high archaeological potential. The remainder of the area consists of school playing field which is probably relatively undisturbed, so any archaeological features present are likely to be well preserved. The assessment has indicated a generally low potential for the presence of archaeology in this area.

**Area B:** The south side of this area contains the projected alignment of Grim's Ditch, and is therefore assigned a high archaeological potential. The remainder of the area consists of school playing field which is probably relatively undisturbed, so any archaeological features present are likely to be well preserved. The assessment has indicated a generally low potential for the presence of archaeology in this area.

- Area C:** The sloping topography of this area mitigates against the presence of archaeology in this area. The cartographic evidence indicates that this area of the site has been disturbed by chalk extraction and tree planting, which would have caused significant disturbance to buried archaeological features or deposits. The assessment indicates a very low potential for encountering archaeology in this area.
- Area D:** This part of the site will have been significantly disturbed by the construction of the school buildings, car park, access and services. Any buried archaeology in this area is likely to have been severely truncated or destroyed. A low archaeological potential is therefore assigned to this area.
- Area E:** The assessment has shown that this area has been in agricultural use for at least the last three centuries, if not longer, so preservation of buried archaeological features and deposits is likely to be good. While it forms part of the plateau area overlooking the Bulbourne valley, and therefore has potential for evidence of prehistoric activity, none has ever been recorded on the assessment site. This area is accordingly assigned a low to moderate archaeological potential.
- Area F:** The assessment has shown that this area has been in agricultural use for at least the last three centuries, if not longer, so preservation of buried archaeological features and deposits is likely to be good. While it forms part of the plateau area overlooking the Bulbourne valley, and therefore has potential for evidence of prehistoric activity, none has ever been recorded on the assessment site. This area is accordingly assigned a low to moderate archaeological potential.

- 6.5 The framework for the management of archaeological issues in the planning system is currently set out in the document PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning*. Decisions relating to archaeological matters within the area of the site are taken by the local planning authority, Dacorum Borough Council, acting on the advice of the Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit.



**Figure 14:** Archaeological potential of the site (scale 1:5,000)

Green = low: Buff = low to moderate: Red = high

## **7 Acknowledgements**

The assessment has been funded jointly by Hertfordshire County Council, Taylor Wimpey Developments Ltd and Egerton-Rothesay School, and was commissioned on their behalf by Woolf Bond Planning. ASC would like to thank Jeremy Woolf for his assistance. Thanks are also due to the HER officer of the Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit for providing access to the HER data. The assistance of the staff at HALS and the Local Studies Library, Berkhamsted, is also gratefully acknowledged.

The research for the assessment, the walkover survey, and preparation of this report were undertaken for ASC by Jonathan Hunn BA PhD MIFA, and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.



## 8 Sites & Monuments Data

Sites listed below are those within the study area, *i.e.* c.1km radius of the site. Locations are shown in Fig. 3.

HER No	NGR	Period	Type	Description
0178	SP 98 08 (point)	mid Iron Age	artefact	Copper alloy brooch
1336	SP 995 083	Roman	artefacts	Coins
2022	SP 970 083	Iron Age	crop mark	Grims Ditch (Darr's Lane)
2023	SP 9763 0796	Iron Age	earthwork	Grim's Ditch (Durrants Lane)
2716	SP 996 087	Roman	building	Occupation site
4251	SP 995 082	Bronze Age	artefact	Copper alloy brooch
4447	SP 9744 0883	Late Saxon/med	building	St Mary's Church (Northchurch)
4853	SP 97 08 (point)	Roman	artefact	Cu alloy trumpet brooch
4856	SP 99 06 (point)	Iron Age	artefact	Gold stater (coin)
4904	SP 985 090	Iron Age/Roman	structures	Iron working furnaces
5231	SP 9823 0849	Post-medieval	structure	Bridge over canal
5489	SP 9797 0718	Post-medieval	structure	Brick pillar wall box
6071	SP 992 084	Roman	artefacts	Pottery
6083	SP 992 083	Roman	structure	Pottery kiln
6421	SP 983 083	Roman	features	Occupation site
6437	SP 984 085	Roman	artefacts	Pottery
7194	SP 982 084	Post-medieval	structure	Milepost erected in 1893
7369	SP 9877 0850	Roman & med	artefacts	Miscellaneous finds
9289	SP 9796 0846	Post-medieval	building	Edgeworth House (Grade II*)
9301	SP 9742 0877	Post-medieval	building	Church almshouses (Grade II*)
9314	SP 9817 0835	Post-medieval	Structure (site of)	Parish workhouse (demolished)
9316	SP 9741 0880	Post-medieval	Structure (site of)	Village stocks
9317	SP 9741 0877	medieval	Site location	Manorial establishment
10119	SP 9723 0823	medieval	earthworks	Ridge and furrow
10778	SP 981 086	Post-medieval	earthwork	Chalk pit
11479	SP 9740 0720	LBA/EIA	Site location	settlement
11800	SP 9834 0821	Post-medieval	Site location	Semi-detached house
12050	SP 9733 0881	Post-medieval	feature	Boundary ditch ?

## 9 References

### *Standards & Specifications*

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- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings)*.

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## 10 Cartographic Sources

*The following maps and plans were consulted in the course of this assessment:*

Date	Reference	Description
1766	Dury & Andrews'	Map of Hertfordshire . Herts Record Society 2004
1808	HALS: AH 684	Map of Durrants Farm
1839	HALS: DSA4/73/2	Tithe Apportionment map
1878	OS XXXII.8	1 <sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch scale map
1898	OS XXXII.8	2 <sup>nd</sup> edition 25 inch scale map
1911	IR1 358 map XXXII.8	Land Tax map 'Lloyd George's Domesday'
c. 1919	HALS: D/EX 664	Sale particulars of Woodcock Hill estate
1924	OS XXXII.8	3 <sup>rd</sup> edition 25 inch scale map
1940	OS XXXII.8	4 <sup>th</sup> edition 25 inch scale map
1960	OS SP 90 NE	1:10,560 scale (revised 1945; boundaries 1959)
1969	OS SP 9708	1: 2500 scale
1996	OS SP 9707	1: 2500 scale
2008	OS Landplan	1: 5000

## 11 Air Photographs

*The following photographs were examined in the course of this assessment:*

Identification	Date	Type (O/V)	Description/comments
HALS: AP sheet 662 & 668	Oct, 1972	V	SP 9608/9708; 9607/9607 at 1:2500 scale (approx)
HALS: AP sheet 662 & 668	May, 1980	V	SP 9608/9708; 9607/9607 at 1:2500 scale (approx)
HALS: AP sheet 662 & 668	July, 1990	V	SP 9608/9708; 9607/9607 at 1:2500 scale (approx)

## 12 Other Information

Notes in possession of the author, concerning the physical and ecological character of Grims Ditch along the north of the playfield (Area A) were also consulted.

## Appendix 1: Method Statement for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

*Archaeological desk-based assessment is an assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area, consisting of a collation of existing information in order to identify the likely extent, character and quality of the known or potential archaeological resource, in order that appropriate measures might be considered* (IFA 2000).

### 1 Standards

The desk-based assessment will be carried out in accordance with Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000). This specification has been prepared with reference to the IFA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 2001).

### 2 Aims

In general terms, the aims of the desk-based study shall be:

- To determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of the historic environment of the site, from documentary sources;
- To provide a comprehensive assessment of the regional context within which the archaeological evidence rests, and to highlight any research priorities relevant to any further investigation of the site;
- To provide a predictive model of the archaeological remains likely to be present on site, and to assess their significance;
- To provide sufficient information to enable the formulation of an appropriate strategy for the management and/or investigation of the historic environment of the site.

### 3 Methods

Any of the following sources of information may be consulted for the desk-based assessment, providing that they are readily available:

#### 3.1 Archaeological Databases

Archaeological databases represent the standard references to the known archaeology of an area.

**SOURCE TYPE:** Archaeological Excavation & Survey Records, National Monuments Records, National Buildings Records, County Sites & Monuments Records, Listed Buildings Lists, Scheduled Ancient Monuments Lists, Regional Inventories, Public & Private Collections of Artefacts and Ecofacts.

**SOURCE LOCATION:** National Heritage Bodies, Royal Commissions, Local Authorities, Museums, Archaeological Trusts & Units, Universities, Ordnance Survey, Local Archaeological & Historical Societies.

#### 3.2 Historic Documents

Documentary research provides an overview of the history of a site and its environs, suggesting the effects of settlement and land-use patterns. The potential for further detailed documentary research will also be considered in the assessment.



**SOURCE TYPE:** Charters, Registers, Manuscript Collections (secular and ecclesiastical), Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers, Electoral Rolls, Contemporary Published Accounts (e.g. County & Agricultural Surveys), Industrial Investigations, Trade Directories.

**SOURCE LOCATION:** Public Record Office, Parish Records, Estate Collections, Museums, National & Local Libraries, County & District Archives, Study Centres, Press Libraries, Ordnance Survey, British Library.

### 3.3 *Cartographic & Pictorial Documents*

This is normally a very productive area of research.

**SOURCE TYPE:** Early Maps, Prints and Paintings, Inclosure & Tithe Maps, Ordnance Survey maps, Estate Plans, Goad Maps.

**SOURCE LOCATION:** Public Record Office, Parish Records, Estate Collections, Museums, National & Local Libraries, County & District Archives, Press Libraries, Ordnance Survey, Private Collections, Local Archaeological & Historical Societies.

### 3.4 *Aerial Photographs*

Given favourable light and crop conditions, aerial photographs can reveal buried features in the form of crop and soil marks. They can also provide an overview of and more specific information about land use at a given time.

**SOURCE TYPE:** Air Photographs.

**SOURCE LOCATION:** National Registers of Air Photographs (inc. RAF & OS flights), Museum Collections, National Heritage Bodies, Sites & Monuments Records, University Collections, Private Collections.

### 3.5 *Geotechnical Information*

A description of the topography and solid and surface geology of the site and its environs will be compiled, so as to appreciate the potential condition of any archaeological remains, to assess the hydrological conditions, and to appraise the potential for the survival of buried waterlogged archaeological / palaeoenvironmental deposits.

**SOURCE TYPE:** Borehole & Test-Pit Logs, Site Surveys, Geological Maps.

**SOURCE LOCATION:** Client's Engineers Records, Ordnance Survey, British Standards Institute, British Geological Publications.

### 3.6 *Secondary & Statutory Sources*

**SOURCE TYPE:** Regional & Period Archaeological Studies, Landscape Studies, Local Knowledge, Dissertations, Policy Statements and Research Frameworks, Legislative documents, European Directives, Local Government Plans, Constraints Maps.

**SOURCE LOCATION:** Libraries, Local Landowners, Local & National Museums, Universities, Academic Journals, Monographs & Other Publications, Local Archaeological & Historical Societies.

### 3.7 *Preliminary Walk-Over Survey*

As part of the assessment a preliminary walk-over survey of the site will be undertaken with the following aims:

1. To examine any areas of archaeological potential identified during research for the assessment, in particular with a view to gauging the possible survival or condition of any remains present.
2. To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.
3. To assess the present site use and ground conditions, with a view to the appropriate deployment of fieldwork techniques, if required.
4. With regard to (3), to carry out a Health & Safety Risk Assessment of the site.

#### **4 Staffing**

The assessment will be managed by ASC's Manager, **Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA**, an established archaeologist with extensive experience in managing archaeological projects, of a wide range of fieldwork, post-excavation and publication work in both rural and urban environments. Research and reporting for the assessment will be carried out by one of ASC's Project Officers, all of whom are members of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (MIFA or AIFA), with demonstrable track records in a wide range of fieldwork and assessment projects. Further details are available on ASC's website ([www.archaeological-services.co.uk](http://www.archaeological-services.co.uk)).

#### **5 Reporting**

5.1 The assessment report will normally be prepared within four weeks, and will typically include:

- a concise non-technical summary of the results
- information relating to the circumstances of the project
- background information about the site
- a summary of the aims of the project and the methods used
- the results of the research detailed above, supported by appropriate illustrative material
- a predictive model of the nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any archaeological material on the site revealed by the assessment
- the contents and location of the archive
- a database of information and a full bibliography

Copies of the report will be provided as required

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