



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK
BASED ASSESSMENT**

**MARCHMONT FARM
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**PAUL CHADWICK BA FSA MIFA &
SALLY DICKS BA**

OCTOBER 2004

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BASED ASSESSMENT**

**MARCHMONT FARM
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
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**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

SITE CENTRED AT: TL 057 091

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF STUDY

- 1.1 This archaeological desk-based assessment has been researched and prepared by Paul Chadwick and Sally Dicks of CgMs Consulting on behalf of LDA Design.
- 1.2 The assessment considers land at Marchmont Farm, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire centred on grid reference TL 057 091. The site is some c. 19 hectares in extent and is bounded to the south by the A 4147, to the east by Grove Hill Park and adjacent residential development, to the west by fields and to the north by a housing estate at Grovehill (Figs. 1 and 2).
- 1.3 In accordance with government guidance on archaeology and planning (PPG16) this assessment draws together the available archaeological, topographic and land-use information in order to clarify the archaeological potential of the site. In addition, this study accords with the standards and guidance issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA).
- 1.4 The assessment comprises an examination of evidence held by English Heritage's National Archaeological Record (NAR) and in the Hertfordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), incorporates published and unpublished material, and charts historic land-use through a map regression exercise. A site inspection was undertaken during October 2004.
- 1.5 As a result, the assessment enables relevant parties to assess the archaeological potential of the site and to consider the need for design, civil engineering, and/or archaeological solutions to any potential identified.

2.0 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) “Archaeology and Planning”, providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.
- 2.2 In considering any proposal for development, including allocations in emerging development plans, the local planning authority will be mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16, by current Development Plan policy and by other material considerations.
- 2.3 The relevant strategic development plan policy framework is provided by the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 (incorporating Approved Modifications) adopted in 1991. The Plan contains the following policy relating to archaeology:

“POLICY 14

THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY AND OTHER AGENCIES WILL MAKE FULL USE OF ALL APPROPRIATE POWERS TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY. PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE REFUSED FOR ANY DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT SUCH SITES OR THEIR SETTING. AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE WILL BE DEFINED AND INCLUDED IN DISTRICT LOCAL PLANS. WHERE, EXCEPTIONALLY, DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THESE AREAS IS ALLOWED, ACCESS TO SITES WILL BE REQUIRED IN ORDER TO RECORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS IN ADVANCE OF AND, WHEN NECESSARY, DURING DEVELOPMENT.

- 2.4 The Local Plan policy framework is provided by the Dacorum District Local Plan adopted in April 1995 and the Deposit Draft of the first review of the Local Plan published in January 1999.

2.4.1 The Deposit Draft Plan contains the following policy which provides a framework for the consideration of development proposals affecting archaeological and heritage features.

“POLICY 118 IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS OR OTHER NATIONALLY IMPORTANT SITES AND MONUMENTS, OR THEIR SETTINGS. ENGLISH HERITAGE WILL BE CONSULTED ON ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS AFFECTING SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS.

ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OR MONUMENTS OF A MORE LOCAL IMPORTANCE AND THEIR SETTINGS, PHYSICAL PRESERVATION IN SITU WILL BE THE PREFERRED OPTION AND APPLICATIONS MAY BE REFUSED. THE COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP WILL BE CONSULTED ON ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS AFFECTING AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL.

WHERE ADVICE INDICATES THAT A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WILL AFFECT REMAINS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL, DEVELOPERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE THE RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AS PART OF THEIR PLANNING APPLICATION.

WHERE THE COUNCIL CONSIDERS THAT PHYSICAL PRESERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS IN SITU IS NOT MERITED, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE SUBJECT TO SATISFACTORY PROVISION BEING MADE FOR EXCAVATION AND RECORDING. CONDITIONS AND/OR AGREEMENTS WILL BE USED TO SECURE THE FOLLOWING WORK, DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF THE SITE:

(A) AN ADEQUATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF THE SITE PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE WORKS; AND/OR

(B) THE OBSERVATION BY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPERTS OF THE SITE WORKS AS THEY PROGRESS; AND/OR

(C) THE RECORDING OF REMAINS BY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPERTS AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE RESULTS AND/OR

(D) THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES, INCLUDING ACCESS OVER AN AGREED PERIOD OF TIME; AND/OR

(E) SUCH OTHER MEASURES AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE SITE.

WHERE APPROPRIATE THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE THE ENHANCEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS AND THEIR SETTINGS.

- 2.5 The study site is located c.900m from the Roman Settlement at Gadebridge Park which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. An ‘Area of Archaeological Significance’ is designated in the Local Plan around this Scheduled Monument and its eastern boundary lies c.300m from the study site (see Dacorum Borough Local Plan Proposals Map and list of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Policy 118).
- 2.5.1 In view of these designations nearby, particular attention has been given to the potential impact of the proposed development on the setting of the Scheduled Monument (none is identified).
- 2.5.2 Therefore, this assessment seeks to clarify presence/absence, extent and significance of any other archaeological remains within the study site and thus clarify the relevance of Structure Plan Policy 14 and Local Plan Policy 118 to the study site.

3.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

3.1 Geology

- 3.1.1 The solid geology of the site is shown by the Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS 1979) comprising Chalk.
- 3.1.2 Further detail is provided by the 1:50,000 series Geological Survey (Sheet 238) which shows the site comprises deposits of Middle and Upper Chalk. The Middle Chalk outcrops on the lower slopes within the central part of the study site. Within the dry valleys in the southern and western parts of the study site Glacial Gravels overlie Middle Chalk. Colluvial soils are also likely to exist above the Glacial Gravels within the dry valleys.
- 3.1.3 To-date no geotechnical data is available for the study site.

3.2 Topography

- 3.2.1 The study site lies on the north-western edge of the built area of Hemel Hempstead, immediately west of a suburb known as Grovehill. The site occupies a hillside forming the eastern side of the Gade Valley, with the River Gade lying some 0.75km west of the site.
- 3.2.2 The Gade Valley, which appears to be a Glacial outwash valley, drains south, through the Chalk outcrop of the Chilterns. Within this wider topographic setting, the study site occupies a south-west facing slope, and within the site levels grade down from 140m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) along the north-eastern site boundary to 105m AOD in the south-west corner of the site. Gradients within the site range from gentle (along the north-eastern site boundary and in a localised area

of spur south of Piccotts End Lane at the north-western corner of the site) to steep on the remainder of the site.

3.2.3 No watercourses occur on the site, although a dry valley ‘drains’ southwards through the western part of the study site into a larger dry valley which bounds the site to the south and in turn ‘drains’ in to the River Gade.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Including Map Regression Exercise.

4.1 Timescales used in this report.

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	450,000	-	12,000	BC
Mesolithic	12,000	-	4,000	BC
Neolithic	4,000	-	1,800	BC
Bronze Age	1,800	-	600	BC
Iron Age	600	-	AD 43	

Historic

Roman	AD 43	-	410	
Saxon/Early Medieval	AD 410	-	1066	
Medieval	AD 1066	-	1485	
Post Medieval	AD 1486	-	1800	
Modern	AD 1800	-	Present	

4.2 The Gade Valley, within which the study site lies, forms the base for an archaeological landscape well known for its wealth of Roman settlement. The Roman Settlement at Gadebridge Park which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument is located c.900m west of the study site. However, within the vicinity of the study site there is only a modest number of sites and finds recorded on the Hertfordshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

4.2.1 Accordingly, this assessment aims to examine the broader patterns evident in the data and, by looking at the character, distribution and extent of archaeological

material and supplementing this with cartographic evidence, provides a predictive model for the archaeology of the study site.

4.3 **Palaeolithic**

4.3.1 There are no entries in the SMR evidencing the presence of any sites or artefactual material of Palaeolithic date on or in the vicinity of the site. The topography of the study site and the area generally is likely to have been subject to solifluction, which will have transported soil, rock and any artefactual material down slope into 'Head' deposits in the floor of the dry valleys within the western and southern parts of the site. Although, there is a potential for heavily rolled flint implements of Lower Palaeolithic date, to be found deep within these deposits, these finds are not in-situ and as result a low potential is identified for this period.

4.3.2 In the Upper Palaeolithic, hunter-gathers exploited estuarine and river valley habitats, however, due to the location of the study site up slope and away from the river, a low potential for evidence of this period is identified on the study site.

4.4 **Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age**

4.4.1 There are no recorded Mesolithic finds recorded within 1km of the study site. Here, as elsewhere in lowland Britain, sites tend to occur close to rivers or other water sources. Generally, Mesolithic material is spread sparsely across the landscape and, as a result, a low potential for evidence of this period is identified on the study site.

4.4.2 During the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, the pace of woodland clearance to create arable and pasture-based agricultural land undoubtedly varied, depending on a wide variety of climatic, topographic, social and other factors, but the trend was one of a slow, but increasing pace of forest clearance. Within this region it is likely that the first farmers initially cleared areas along the valley floor and lower valley slopes.

- 4.4.3 Within 1km of the study site there are no sites and finds of Neolithic or Bronze Age date. Due to the location of the study site further up slope from the valley bottom and the modest number of recorded Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts locally, a low potential is identified for evidence of this period.
- 4.4.4 Later Bronze Age occupation has been located locally. In 1993, in advance of a housing development at Gadebridge some 1.5km south-west of the study site (SMR 7981 at TL 04 08), an area of pits and postholes representing probable Bronze Age dwellings was located and investigated. Nearby, several cremation burials, also dated to the Late Bronze Age were found. Nevertheless, although this excavated site and evidence from elsewhere in the Chilterns suggests an expansion of settlement, woodland clearance and farming in the Late Bronze Age, there is no evidence to suggest that similar deposits are likely to occur on the study site. Indeed gradients on the study site suggest settlement is particularly unlikely.
- 4.4.5 The Iron Age is characterised in this region by settlement stability and the large-scale organisation of the landscape, developments that began in the late Bronze Age. Settlement evidence is plentiful and diverse, ranging from individual farmsteads occupied by a single household, to enclosed settlement holding much larger communities. A large hillfort at Redbourn ('The Aubreys'), some 3.5km north-east of the study site probably played a pre-eminent part in the local settlement hierarchy. Within the region archaeological investigations have identified evidence of smaller scale settlement in the area of Aspley c.4km to the south and on Buncefield Lane c.2km south-west of the study site. Within 1km of the study site, a single Iron Age coin was found on Dodds Lane c. 600m north-east of the study. The steep gradients within the southern and western parts of the study site would have been unattractive for settlement and as a result, a low-nil potential is identified for evidence in these areas. Additionally, due to the lack of evidence for settlement within the general

vicinity a low potential is also identified for the remaining areas of more gradual slope.

4.4.6 In any event, whilst it can be conjectured that the natural woodland cover on the study site would have been cleared during the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age, and the area utilised for farming, probably stock grazing, there is no direct evidence from the site to support this and such activities are in any event, unlikely to leave significant archaeological deposits. A low potential is therefore identified.

4.5 **Roman**

4.5.1 By the end of the 1st century AD it is clear that the Gade Valley and its hinterland was a prosperous farming district. The route of a major Roman Road from St Albans runs through a strategic gap in the Chilterns c.3.5km south of the study site (SMR 4595 and 4582; Margary 1967, Route 16a). The intensity and wealth of Roman occupation in the area is evidenced by two Roman villas, one situated on the western slope of the Gade Valley at Gadebridge Park (SMR 88 at TL 0495 0865: c.900m west of the study site) and the second in the Bulbourne Valley at Boxmoor (SMR 72 at TL 045 063: c. 2.5km south-west of the study site). These villas served as a focus for large farmed estates and it is assumed that the study site fell within the area farmed and controlled by the Gadebridge villa.

4.5.2 Within 1km of the study site, to the east of the River Gade there are no recorded sites or finds dated to the Roman period. Although it can be postulated that the study site was cleared of its woodland cover and farmed, gradients on the site and an absence of evidence for lynchets, point to the hillslopes in the Gade Valley being in pastoral use for the grazing of stock. Such activities are in any event, unlikely to leave significant archaeological deposits and therefore, a low potential is identified for sub-surface features on the study site. However, due to the proximity of the settlement at Gadebridge Park, a low-moderate potential is identified for the

presence of stray finds within the subsoil and topsoil horizons, albeit in a derived context due to soil creep down slope.

4.6 **Saxon / Medieval**

- 4.6.1 The character, extent and location of Post-Roman/Saxon settlement in the area is almost completely unknown. The settlement and communication replaced the Roman one remains obscure, but a complete abandonment of fertile, well-drained agricultural land seems inconceivable. Archaeological investigations at Gadebridge Park did not evidence a continuation of settlement into the early Saxon period and within 1km of the study site there are no recorded sites or finds dated to this period.
- 4.6.2 Place-name evidence suggest that the southern and western parts of Hertfordshire lay in the territory of the Middle Saxons, effectively within the East Saxon Kingdom from the late 6th century, and that by the 7th century the area formed part of Mercia. In 704 there is reference to Offa, King of Essex giving land at ‘Haemel’ to Waldhere, Bishop of London (Mawer and Stenton 1938).
- 4.6.3 Settlements are known at Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted from the late Saxon period, however there is no evidence to suggest occupation on or near the study site in this period. The Domesday survey of 1086 mentions a Mill at Piccotts End and it is believed it stood on the site of the current Mill, built in the 18th century (SMR 5786 at TL 0499 0920). A row of cottages dated to the Medieval period are located to the south of the Mill (SMR 6193 at TL 0513 0911).
- 4.6.4 Indeed, the location of the study site in an area close to the Hemel’s parish boundary, hints at the marginal location of this site in the Saxon and Medieval periods. Therefore, a low potential is identified for evidence dated to this period within the study site.

4.7 **Post Medieval- Modern**

- 4.7.1 The earliest Map showing the site at a useful scale is the Drury and Andrews Map dated 1766 (Fig. 3). The map shows the site occupied by fields in arable and pastoral land-use. Two trackways/ Lanes are depicted crossing the site in an east to west direction.
- 4.7.2 The Tithe Map of 1840 shows the study site formed by four large, enclosed fields. The Award records records all four fields in arable use. Field names within the study site, recorded in the Tithe Award include 'Roundabouts' (Field No. 1460), 'Round field' (Field No. 1268) and 'Clap Gate' (Field Nos. 1461 and 1462). The field names 'Roundabouts' and 'Round field' probably refer to the shape of the fields and the way in which their boundaries follow the rounded contours within the study site rather than evidencing earlier land use. The Tithe Map also indicates that the eastern boundary of the study site follows the western boundary of the Grovehill Estate.
- 4.7.3 There has been no change to the field pattern within the study site from the 1840's to the present day (Figs. 4: 1883 Ordnance Survey, 5: 1960 and 6: 1996/1982). Although, from the 1960's onwards Hemel Hempstead underwent massive expansion and by the 1980's the fields within the study site were bounded to the east by extensive residential development (Figs. 5 and 6).
- 4.7.4 The map regression exercise demonstrates that throughout the Post-Medieval and more recent period the study site lay within land in agricultural use. As a result, a low-nil potential is identified for Post-Medieval or Modern evidence of historic importance within the study site.

5.0 SITE CONDITIONS AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Site Conditions

5.1.1 The study site is bisected by Piccotts End Lane, a traffic-free lane bounded by mature hedges. Either side of the Lane, fields are either hedged or fenced and are variously horse-grazed or unmanaged pasture.

5.1.2 No earthworks were noted during a perambulation of the site and generally, gradients within the site are too steep to have supported prehistoric or historic settlement. Indeed, it can be anticipated that soil movement down-slope will have resulted in an accumulation of Colluvial deposits within the dry valleys in the south-western part of the site and off-site to the south. Within these deposits it can be anticipated that artefactual evidence in a derived context might occur.

5.2 The Proposed Development

5.2.1 The study site is currently being promoted for development through the review of the Dacorum Local Plan.

5.2.2 This desk-based assessment has established that the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Gadebridge Park (c.900m west of the study site) will not be impacted on by the proposed development, and that there are no other archaeological sites enjoying statutory protection on or near the study site. In addition, a low potential for evidence dating to the Prehistoric, Saxon/early Medieval and Medieval periods is identified. However, a moderate potential has been identified for the presence of stray finds dating to the Roman period within colluvium or subsoil horizons.

- 5.2.3 In view of the limited archaeological potential of the study site it is anticipated that the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) will not object to the allocation of this site in the Local Plan on archaeological grounds.
- 5.2.4 However, once a planning application for development is submitted, it can be anticipated that because of the proximity of the Area of Archaeological Significance, the CAO will request an archaeological evaluation exercise in accordance with Policy 14 of the Structure Plan, in order that any necessary mitigation measures can be identified.
- 5.2.5 Should the evaluation have positive results (which this assessment suggests is unlikely), subsequent archaeological investigations would be required and this would be secured by a PPG 16 paragraph 30 condition which states:

No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Land at Marchmont Farm, some 19 hectares in extent is currently being promoted for residential development through the review of the Dacorum Local Plan.
- 6.2 This desk-based assessment has established that there will be no impacts on the nearby Scheduled Ancient Monument at Gadebridge Park or on its setting and that there are no other sites enjoying statutory protection on or near the study site. In addition, a low potential for evidence dating to the Prehistoric, Saxon/early Medieval and Medieval periods is identified. However, a moderate potential has been identified for the presence of stray finds dating to the Roman period within colluvium and subsoil horizons.
- 6.3 In view of the limited archaeological potential of the study site it is anticipated that the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) will not raise an objection to the allocation of this site in the Local Plan.
- 6.4 However, once a planning application for development is submitted, it can be anticipated that because of the proximity of the Area of Archaeological Significance, the CAO will request an archaeological evaluation exercise in accordance with Policy 14 of the Structure Plan, in order that any necessary mitigation measures can be identified.
- 6.5 In view of the low potential for archaeological remains on the steep slopes within the study site, it is likely that a programme of archaeological evaluation would be limited to less steep gradients within the eastern part of the study site and in the colluvium covered dry valley floor.

6.6 Should the evaluation have positive results (which this assessment suggests is unlikely), subsequent archaeological investigations would be required and this would be secured by a PPG 16 paragraph 30 condition which states:

No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority.

SOURCES CONSULTED

1. **General**

Alison Tinniswood Archaeological Officer
English Heritage National Archaeological Record (NAR)
Hertfordshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
Hertfordshire County Record Office
Hertfordshire County Local History Centre
Hemel Hempstead Library

2. **Bibliographic**

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VCH	1971	A History of Hertfordshire

3. **Cartographic**

1766 Drury and Andrews Map of Hertfordshire
1883 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 scale
1960 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 scale
1996/1982 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 scale

