

Date: 28th January 2026

Our ref: GHC/1397/01

By Email only

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Re: Land East of Cambridge Road, Hardwick HELLA Assessment

Hill has promoted land east of Cambridge Road in Harwick for a mixed-used development including residential. The assessment of the site in the updated HELAA identified 'green' and 'amber' scores for most site suitability criteria. The assessment identified 'red' scores for landscape and archaeology.

The site has been subject to RAG assessments in 2021, 2023 and 2025.

The 2021 assessment stated that:

Cropmarks of late prehistoric and Roman settlement are recorded in the area
RAG 'Amber'

The 2023 assessment (informed by an archaeological desk based assessment produced by Lanpro Services) stated that:

Desk Based Assessment suggests local significance for known heritage assets. Significance cannot be considered without field assessment. On this basis the assessment for the site remains unchanged as Amber as there is evidence of archaeology in the area that will require further investigation.
RAG 'Amber'

The updates RAG score for archaeology issued in 2025 stated:

Updated HER information indicates the presence of an extensive settlement of Iron Age date. In light of this information, further information would be necessary to determine the suitability of this site for development.
RAG 'Red'

We have consulted the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER) (consultation No. CHER6116) to identify what additional information has come to light since the 2019 Desk Based Assessment (DBA) was produced. It would appear that the only substantive new information that has come to light is that an area of cropmarks within the northern part of the site (MCB21424), which in 2019 were provisionally interpreted as an Iron Age and/or Roman enclosure comprising a

large round ditch with an incomplete polygonal double ditched enclosure to the south has been subject to further archaeological investigation. The 2019 DBA concluded that:

On current understanding remains of Iron Age/Roman farmsteads and associated enclosures/field systems are unlikely to be of more than local significance. There are a large number of such remains known in the region and whilst the investigation of these remains would add to the general corpus of information there is nothing to indicate that they would make any particularly great contribution towards regional research objectives.

Subsequent to the DBA being produced this northern part of the site has been subject to geophysical survey (AOC Archaeology 2022) and Trial Trench Evaluation (MOLA 2024) in connection with the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) Better Public Transport Project. The geophysical survey provided more clarity on the morphology of the features identified from the cropmark evidence and the trial trench evaluation confirmed the presence and date of these features and concluded that:

In Section 2 (Area B)(FIGURE 5) a fragmented group of adjoining enclosures were recorded, formed of two smaller northern enclosures and a larger southern enclosure bounded by a possible ditched driveway/trackway and with an internal ring ditch. The activity identified here was the earliest activity identified across the route of the scheme investigated during both phases of the evaluation, with consistent dates evidencing activity predominantly of an Iron Age date, but with some indication of later activity in to the Pre-Roman Iron Age. Residual Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age finds recovered further indicate possible earlier activity in the vicinity. Animal bones with evidence of butchery marks along with locally produced pottery wares recovered from the ditches is indicative of small scale, localised agricultural activity and associated settlement. The fragmentary nature of the enclosure group is identifiable on the results of the geophysical survey but the cause of the fragmentation was not ascertained during the course of the evaluation i.e. modern disturbance or deliberate segmentation for access/entranceways.

The results of the geophysical survey and trial trench evaluation are, therefore, largely consistent with the initial assessment, albeit that they provide a greater understanding of the date of the remains. The identified archaeology, whilst certainly of interest, is not exceptional for the locality in terms of date, preservation or potential to add to regional research objectives and, therefore, there is no indication that the remains could not be subjects to archaeological excavation and recording prior to development, should it not be possible or desirable to preserve them in situ.

Given the above it is unclear as to why the RAG assessment for the site has been upgraded from 'Amber' to 'Red'. The criteria for the RAG assessment is presented in Annex 1 of the Greater Cambridge Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) 2025. In relation to archaeology the criteria is defined as:

Archaeology

Score: Red

Assessment criteria:

Known archaeology of significance which could not be mitigated through design or conditions.

Score: Amber

Assessment criteria: Development of the site could have a detrimental impact to archaeology.

Further information regarding the extent and significance of archaeology would be required.

Archaeological works could be secured by condition of planning permission.

Score: *Green*

Assessment criteria:

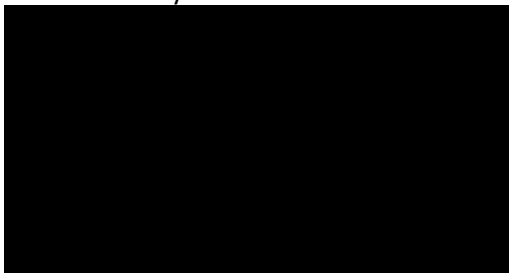
Development of the site would have either a neutral or positive impact to archaeology.

The County Archaeology Team were consulted on each of the sites and assessments have been informed by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER) (see paragraph 196 of the NPPF). Each site was assessed against known areas of archaeology using GIS data. Where a site contained known archaeology of significance which could not be mitigated by the development, these sites were scored Red. Examples of this include sites containing Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

According to the above criteria, in order to fall within the 'Red' category the archaeological remains would need to be known to be of demonstrable national importance. It is quite clearly the case that the known archaeology within the site is not of such a high level of significance. Furthermore the criteria is clear that 'Red' sites relate to known archaeology that can not be mitigated, whereas the comments from the Archaeology Officer state that further information would be required, which clearly places it in the 'Amber' category.

It is, therefore, clear that the site should not be scored 'Red' for the HELAA and that the previous 'Amber' score is the most appropriate.

Yours sincerely

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