



# Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd

## Comet Hotel, Hatfield

### Archaeological Appraisal

**August 2015**

as amended August 2016

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Checked by:	Kirsten Holland, Associate Archaeology and Heritage	Signed:
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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This Archaeological Appraisal has been prepared to assess the potential for archaeological remains to be present within the development site, or be affected by the proposed development at the Comet Hotel, Comet Way, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. The production of this study follows pre-application discussion with Andy Instone, Archaeological Adviser to Hertfordshire County Council.

The built heritage of the development site, including the existing hotel building, is considered within a separate Heritage Statement (WYG, 2015) and is not discussed in detail within this report.

### 1.2 Aims and Objectives

This study aims to examine the archaeological potential of the proposed development options. The objectives of the study are to:

- Identify recorded archaeological sites within the site boundary.
- Identify the potential for previously unrecorded sites to be present within the site.
- Identify potential impacts and mitigation strategies, where appropriate.
- Make recommendations, where required.

## 2.0 Site Location and Conditions

The hotel is located on the junction of Comet Way (A1001) and St Albans Road West (A1057). The junction includes a large roundabout that gives access to the A1(M) via a junction to the south and the Hatfield Galleria retail development immediately to the north-east.

The original Musman building has been extensively extended since its construction. Bedroom, conference and reception facilities extend from the south-west end of the original building and have spread to the north, covering an extensive area in the western part of the Site, where the proposed development will be located. Extensive areas to the front and both north and south of the original Musman building are beneath tarmac and are used for car parking and turning areas. There is also a further car park to the west of the modern extensions. The remainder of the western end of the Site includes remnants of the original



landscaping for the Comet Hotel, including mature trees that serve to screen and interrupt views of and noise from Comet Way.

## 3.0 Planning Policy Context

### 3.1 National Legislation and Guidance

The following legislation and guidance guide development at a national level in terms of archaeology and heritage:

- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979;
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012); and
- National Planning Policy Guidance (2014).

### 3.2 Local Policy and Guidance

The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan was adopted in 2005. The majority of its policies were saved in 2008 pending the development of the Local Plan. The relevant saved policy is Policy R29 – Archaeology:

Where a proposal for development may affect remains of archaeological significance, or may be sited in an area of archaeological potential, developers will be required to undertake an archaeological assessment, if necessary with a field evaluation, and to submit a report on the findings to the Local Planning Authority, before an application is determined.

Planning permission will not be granted for development which adversely affects the site or setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, or other nationally important sites and monuments. Where development proposals affect sites and monuments of less than national importance, the Council will seek preservation in situ of remains. In cases where this is neither feasible, nor merited, planning permission may be granted, subject to conditions requiring adequate provision being made for excavation and recording.

When planning permission is granted for development that would affect archaeological remains, taking into account the importance of the remains, conditions will be imposed to ensure that the remains are



properly recorded, the results analysed and published and where practicable, the management and presentation of archaeological sites and their settings is enhanced. (Welwyn Hatfield 2015)

## 4.0 Sources Consulted

The following sources of information were used to inform and prepare this report:

- Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record;
- National Heritage List (Historic England);
- National Record of the Historic Environment;
- Aerial imagery from Google Earth; and
- Historic maps from [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk) and National Library of Scotland website.

A study area of one kilometre radius around the hotel (NGR TL 2128 0830) has been examined to assess the cultural heritage potential within the site itself and the surrounding area. Heritage assets in the wider local and regional context are also discussed, where appropriate. This assessment does not attempt to plot and review every archaeological find and monument; rather it aims to examine the distribution of evidence and to use this to predict the archaeological potential of the study area and the likely significance of the development proposals on those remains.

Further information on recorded sites is included in Appendix B and Figure 2.

## 5.0 Heritage Constraints and Potential

### 5.1 Historical and Archaeological Background

#### 5.1.1 The Hotel

The Comet Hotel is an Art Deco building and its plan echoes the shape of an aeroplane. Its name reflects local pride in the DH Comet Racer, which was built at the nearby De Havilland aircraft factory. This aircraft won the 1934 England to Australia air race. The hotel was begun in 1933 and opened in 1936, and was designed by E.B. Musman. It is Grade II listed. A Romanesque pillar sculpted by celebrated inter-war artist Eric Kennington, and surmounted by a model of the Comet Racer, stands in front of the hotel. The built



heritage significance of this building and the potential effects of development on the building are discussed within a separately prepared and submitted Heritage Statement (WYG, 2015).

A Grade II listed, 1820, cast iron milestone is located beside St Alban's Road West, on the east side of the northern access to the hotel car park. Further listed buildings are located within the study area. These listed buildings are shown on Figure 2. These buildings are not discussed in detail in this report, but are considered within the Heritage Statement where appropriate (WYG, 2005).

### **5.1.2 Archaeological Background**

A data search of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record has been undertaken and the details of sites can be seen in Appendix B and on Figure 2.

To the north of the Site there is a significant concentration of later Prehistoric material identified within the former Hatfield Aerodrome site. This includes evidence of later Bronze Age and earlier Iron Age settlement that includes possible structures, enclosures, artefacts and hearths (HER 11546 & 11550). There is also later Iron Age material at the adjacent, former De Havilland factory (now under residential housing) as well as at the aerodrome. The factory site has produced artefacts as well as possible cremation burials (HER 11544). This material is consistent with the identification of this area as the heartland of the later Iron Age tribal grouping identified by the Romans as the Catuvellauni, who also appear to have had other centres including Baldock and St Albans. Settlement appears to have continued into the Roman period at the aerodrome site (HER 11549 & 11562). Nevertheless the potential longevity of activity at this site is demonstrated by a Mesolithic axe and other lithics recovered from within the former aerodrome (HER 11908 & 11909) and, in the Post-medieval period by field boundaries (HER 11907).

The closest archaeological remains identified to the development site (aside from the former aerodrome) fall within the University site north of St Albans Road West. These include remains of field boundaries identified on the 1899 OS mapping and recorded during archaeological works in 1999 and 2001 (HER 11540). They are believed to relate to other nearby boundaries, such as HER 11539. The majority of recorded sites are, however, to the north of the site around the modern Cunningham Avenue.

To the south-west of the proposed development site there is a record of a possible archaeological site identified from aerial photographs (HER 2617). This has been identified as a ditched enclosure of probable medieval or post-medieval origin. There is also a post-medieval settlement at Great Nast Hyde at the extreme western edge of the search area (HER 15397). To the south of the site and south of the former railway line (HER 9628) there are a number of HER points, almost all of which relate to post-medieval (e.g.





HER 11830) and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in this area. However, industry is also evident in the chalk pits recorded at Roe Green (HER 13226) and at the University campus (HER 17599).

### 5.1.3 Historic Maps

Historic maps of the site were inspected on the National Library of Scotland website. Maps viewed included:

- Ordnance Survey 6" First Edition (1883, 1899, 1925 & 1949);
- OS 1" Revised New Edition (1892-1908); and
- OS 25" Hertfordshire XXXV (1883, 1896, 1922 & 1939).

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of Hatfield, each map shows the site bounded to the north by Hatfield Road and to the south by the Hatfield & St Albans Railway. Mapping at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shows the site included within agricultural fields, with the only nearby development being cottages at Ellenbrook. The western boundary of the modern site fossilises a boundary shown on the OS First Edition that was once the western edge of a large field bisected by the railway line during its construction in 1864-5. By 1922 there has been limited suburban development north of Hatfield Road, including "Small Holdings" with at least two structures on the site of the hotel. Between the 1922 and 1937 editions the Barnet Bypass was constructed (opened in 1927) coming northwards to meet Hatfield Road and forming the junction onto which the Comet Hotel fronts. Also during this period there had been an extensive expansion of development, including the suburban development at Ellenbrook immediately west of the site and De Havilland aircraft factory (HER 9058) and its associated leisure complex to the north of the hotel site.

None of the historic maps indicates either any antiquities or significant prior development on the site prior to the construction of the hotel.

### 5.1.4 Online Imagery

Google Earth includes imagery for the site back to 2000AD. The 2000 imagery shows the construction of a range of buildings at the west end of the extensions to the original hotel complex.

## 5.2 Existing Site Conditions

The extent of ground disturbance associated with the hotel buildings has not been confirmed, though the Musman range includes a cellar in its original designs. The footprint of the original building will not be affected by the development. Further modern development connected with the extensions to the west of



the original building is likely to have caused extensive truncation of ground levels through the construction of the buildings, foundations and utilities (a small electricity sub-station is located on the western boundary).

## 6.0 Proposed Development

The proposed development is indicated on the proposed layout included in Appendix A. It includes the demolition of existing hotel facilities that have accrued onto the western elevation of the original Musman structure and their replacement by a range of student accommodation in a semi-claustral arrangement. The development includes ranges of studios and "twodios" around two central courts; one court includes a retained mature tree, while the other is the suggested location for a shared leisure facility, such as a cinema. Parking for this complex will be to the north and east of the residential units. The student accommodation is located largely within the footprint of the modern hotel extensions, with only limited construction to the south of the buildings within an area of existing hardstanding.

## 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

There is undoubted archaeological interest in the land to the north of the Site: the former aerodrome and De Havilland factory have both produced extensive evidence of Prehistoric and Roman settlement, as well as medieval and post-medieval agriculture during archaeological investigations associated with the redevelopment of these sites. In addition, there is evidence of medieval and post-medieval rural settlement to the south and west of the Site, including an enclosure identified from aerial photography. Despite this, there is no evidence that the archaeological interest demonstrated on the aerodrome site extends southwards. In addition, later, medieval and post-medieval settlement appears to have been dispersed and there is no evidence that any such site was on or near the proposed development. Indeed, the historic mapping suggests that the development site was agricultural fields until the changes in the road layout in 1927 and the attendant suburban development, around the factory, including the Comet Hotel.

Major 20<sup>th</sup> Century developments close to the Site include realignment of roads, junction improvements and new buildings. Within the Site itself, there has also been relatively recent extension to the hotel complex: the construction of the hotel and its later extensions is anticipated to have caused significant truncation to ground levels and any potential archaeological remains.

Although potentially not so damaging to any buried remains, the levelling and landscaping of car parks and turning areas will have also affected ground levels. It should also be noted that new developments since



1990 (following the introduction of PPG16) do not appear to have attracted archaeological comment or conditions.

As a result of the factors described above it is not considered likely that the Site demonstrates archaeological significance and its archaeological potential is, at best, low. There is little evidence to suggest that the archaeological remains to the north extended southwards onto the Site. The effect of prior development is considered likely to have truncated ground levels and severely impacted any archaeological remains that may have been present. The proposed student accommodation is located largely within the footprint of the modern extension to the hotel and the majority of construction will therefore take place within an area already expected to have been disturbed and truncated.

In the light of this conclusion further archaeological assessment or mitigation for the proposed development is not considered necessary.



## 8.0 References

Welwyn Hatfield (2005) Welwyn Hatfield District Plan: Saved District-Wide Policies  
<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=869&p=0>

WYG (2015) Comet Hotel, Heritage Statement. Unpublished client report.

### **Historic Mapping**

Ordnance Survey 6" First Edition (1883, 1899, 1925 & 1949);

Ordnance Survey 1" Revised New Edition (1892-1908); and

Ordnance Survey 25" Hertfordshire XXXV (1883, 1896, 1922 & 1939).;

Comet Hotel, Hatfield

Archaeological Appraisal



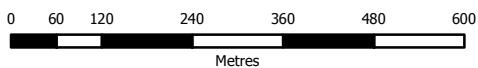
## Appendices

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## **Appendix A – Site Location Plan and Proposed Layout**



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Project: **Coment Hotel, Hatfield**

<b>RAE</b> Created:	<b>MB</b> Checked:	<b>July 2015</b> Date:	<b>V1</b> Version:
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Title:

**Site Location Plan**

Office: <b>4154</b>	Project No: <b>A092423</b>	Figure No: <b>1</b>
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 Figured dimensions only to be taken from this drawing. DO NOT SCALE.  
 All contractors must visit the site and be responsible for checking all setting out dimensions and notifying the architect of any discrepancies prior to any manufacture or construction work.

- NOTES:
- BOUNDARY LINE
  - Proposed Student Residential**
  - Studio rooms = 236
  - Twodios = 36 (72 beds)
  - TOTAL = 272 rooms / 308 beds
  - Proposed Apartment-Hotel**
  - Serviced Apartments = 56

REV	DATE	NOTES
E	19.08.16	PLANNING ISSUE
D	28.01.16	Hedge outside boundary removed
C	01.12.15	Disabled parking/cycle storage updated
B	01.10.15	Labels amended
A	30.09.15	Labels added

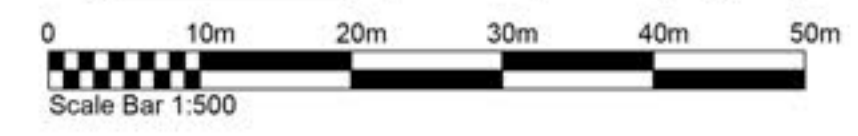
Client  
 FUSION HATFIELD HOTELS LTD

Project  
 HOTEL AND STUDENT RESIDENTIAL  
 COMET HOTEL SITE  
 HATFIELD

Drawing Title  
 PROPOSED SITE PLAN

Drawn	Checked	Paper Size	Scale	Date
NB	ML	A1	1:500	AUG 2016
Project No.	Drawing No.	Revision		
14286	0300	E		

Site Plan



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## Appendix B – Recorded Heritage Sites

### Recorded Heritage Sites (Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record)

IDENTIFIER	NAME	GRADE
DHT9452	MILEPOST TO WEST OF COMET ROUNDABOUT, OPPOSITE COMET PUBLIC HOUSE	II
DHT9540	THE COTTAGE AT GREAT NAST HYDE	II
DHT9571	THE COMET PUBLIC HOUSE	II
DHT9575	HOLLY COTTAGE	II
DHT9685	GREAT NAST HYDE, INCLUDING FRONT GARDEN WALL	II
DHT9735	BRITISH AEROSPACE GATEHOUSE IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF STAFF MESS	II
DHT9743	BRITISH AEROSPACE STAFF MESS	II
DHT9818	TORILLA	II*
DHT9875	THE FLIGHT TEST HANGAR, OFFICES, FIRE STATION AND CONTROL TOWER, BRITISH AEROSPACE	II*
DHT9734	BRITISH AEROSPACE OFFICES	II
DHT11336	MURAL LOCATED IN FORMER LEE VALLEY WATER COMPANY OFFICES AND FREE-STANDING SCULPTURE ON WEST SIDE OF ENTRANCE DRIVE, CHANTRY LANE, HATFIELD	II
MHT11561	PALAEOLITHIC HANDAXE, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11562	LATE IRON AGE/ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11907	POST-MEDIEVAL FIELD BOUNDARIES, HATFIELD AERODROME, HATFIELD	
MHT11908	MESOLITHIC TRANCHET AXE OR THAMES PICK, HATFIELD AERODROME, HATFIELD	
MHT11909	HARD HAMMER STRUCK FLAKE, HATFIELD AERODROME, HATFIELD	
MHT125	LATE IRON AGE OCCUPATION, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11540	BOUNDARY DITCHES, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11544	UNDATED CREMATION, HATFIELD AERODROME	



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IDENTIFIER	NAME	GRADE
MHT11546	LATE BRONZE/EARLY IRON AGE OCCUPATION, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11547	LATE IRON AGE CREMATION URN BASE, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11549	LATE IRON AGE/ROMANO-BRITISH DITCHES AND POTTERY, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11550	LATE BRONZE AGE/EARLY IRON AGE DITCH, HATFIELD AERODROME	
MHT11830	SITE OF ROEGREEN FARM NORTH, COLLEGE ROAD, ROE GREEN, HATFIELD	
MHT11831	SITE OF ROEGREEN FARM SOUTH, COLLEGE ROAD, ROE GREEN, HATFIELD	
MHT12717	ROE HILL HOUSE, BISHOPS RISE, HATFIELD	
MHT2617	CROPMARKS OF A DITCHED FEATURE, HATFIELD	
MHT15569	UNDATED PIT, HOWE DELL PRIMARY SCHOOL, HATFIELD	
MHT465	DENE HOLES, CHANTRY WOOD, CHANTRY LANE, HATFIELD	
MHT5018	MILEPOST, W OF COMET ROUNDABOUT, ELLENBROOK, HATFIELD	
MHT5517	SITE OF HALT, NAST HYDE, HATFIELD	
MHT5614	RAILWAY BRIDGE, LEMS福德 RD, HATFIELD	
MHT30912	THE COMET HOTEL, HATFIELD	
MHT6629	PILLBOX, ROE GREEN LANE, HATFIELD	
MHT9634	SITE OF HALT, LEMS福德 ROAD, HATFIELD	
MHT9058	HATFIELD AERODROME, COMET WAY, HATFIELD	
MHT13226	POST-MEDIEVAL CHALK PIT, OAK GROVE, ROE GREEN, HATFIELD	
MHT13435	DE HAVILLAND WORKS GATEHOUSE, COMET WAY, HATFIELD	
MHT13687	DE HAVILLAND CANTEEN & ADMINISTRATION BLOCKS, COMET WAY, HATFIELD	
MHT13721	BRONZE AGE FLINT FLAKES, HATFIELD BUSINESS PARK, HATFIELD	
MHT15397	GREAT NAST HYDE, WILKIN'S GREEN LANE, ELLENBROOK, HATFIELD	
MHT12698	POST-MEDIEVAL CHALK MINE, BRIARS LANE, HATFIELD	

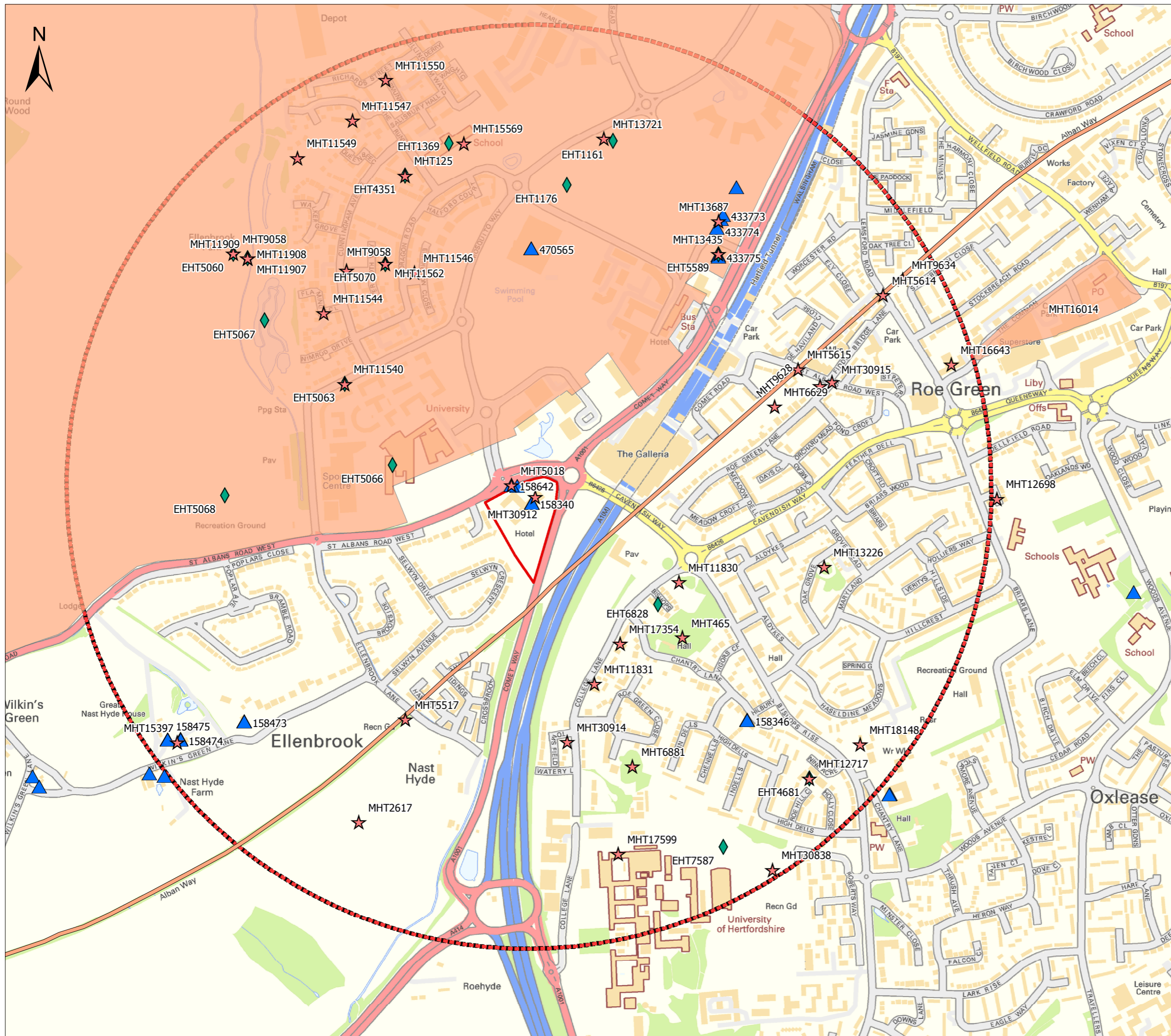


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IDENTIFIER	NAME	GRADE
MHT17599	SITE OF 'CHALK SHAFTS', COLLEGE LANE, HATFIELD	
MHT16643	CHEQUER CINEMA, THE COMMON, ROE GREEN, HATFIELD	
MHT17354	SITE OF MISSION ROOM AND ROE GREEN COTTAGES, COLLEGE LANE, ROE GREEN, HATFIELD	
MHT18148	HATFIELD WATERWORKS, CHANTRY LANE, HATFIELD	
MHT6881	POST-MEDIEVAL CHALK PIT, COLLEGE LANE, HATFIELD	
MHT30838	POSSIBLY MEDIEVAL DITCH, UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE, COLLEGE LANE, HATFIELD	
MHT30913	SITE OF THE FIDDLE PH, 199 ST ALBANS ROAD WEST, HATFIELD	
MHT30914	THE OLD FIDDLE PH, ROE GREEN LANE, HATFIELD	
MHT30915	SITE OF TOLL GATE, ST ALBANS ROAD WEST, HATFIELD	
MHT5615	SITE OF FIDDLE BRIDGE, HATFIELD	
MHT9628	HATFIELD-ST ALBANS BRANCH OF THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY	
EHT4351	Watching brief at Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield, 1998	
EHT4609	Watching brief at Hatfield Aerodrome, Hatfield, 2002	
EHT4681	Building recording at Roe Hill House, Bishops Rise, Hatfield, 2003	
EHT5060	Evaluation at Hatfield Aerodrome, 2001	
EHT5063	Evaluation at Hatfield Aerodrome, 2001	
EHT5066	Evaluation at Hatfield Aerodrome (University of Hertfordshire, stage 1), 2001-2	
EHT5067	Watching brief on the site of the southern balancing lake, Hatfield aerodrome, Hatfield, 2002	
EHT5068	Watching brief on University of Hertfordshire playing fields, Hatfield Aerodrome, 2002	
EHT5070	Evaluation at Hatfield Aerodrome, 2001	
EHT5589	Architectural assessment of the de Havilland Works gatehouse, Hatfield	
EHT1161	Watching brief on Plot 1500, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield, 2007	
EHT1176	Watching brief at Three Valleys Water Hub site, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield	
EHT1369	Watching brief at Howe Dell Primary School, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield, 2005-6	
EHT6828	Observation at Bishops, Roe Green, Hatfield, 1973	



IDENTIFIER	NAME	GRADE
EHT7587	University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, HATFIELD	



**Legend**

- Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Listed Buildings
- HER points
- HER ployline
- HER polygon
- Event points

0 60 120 240 360 480 600  
Metres

<b>RAE</b> Created:	<b>MB</b> Checked:	<b>July 2015</b> Date:	<b>V1</b> Version:
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Client: Fusion Hatfield Hotels Ltd.

Project: Comet Hotel, Hatfield

Title: Recorded Heritage Events

Office: <b>4154</b>	Project No: <b>A092423</b>	Figure No: <b>2</b>
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Comet Hotel, Hatfield

Archaeological Appraisal



## **Appendix C - Report Conditions**



### **Archaeological Appraisal, Comet Hotel, Hatfield**

This report is produced solely for the benefit of **Fusion Hotels Hatfield Ltd** and no liability is accepted for any reliance placed on it by any other party unless specifically agreed by us in writing.

This report is prepared for the proposed uses stated in the report and should not be relied upon for other purposes unless specifically agreed by us in writing. In time technological advances, improved practices, fresh information or amended legislation may necessitate a re-assessment. Opinions and information provided in this report are on the basis of WYG using reasonable skill and care in the preparation of the report.

This report refers, within the limitations stated, to the environment of the site in the context of the surrounding area at the time of the inspections. Environmental conditions can vary and no warranty is given as to the possibility of changes in the environment of the site and surrounding area at differing times.

This report is limited to those aspects reported on, within the scope and limits agreed with the client under our appointment. It is necessarily restricted and no liability is accepted for any other aspect. It is based on the information sources indicated in the report. Some of the opinions are based on unconfirmed data and information and are presented accordingly within the scope for this report.

Reliance has been placed on the documents and information supplied to WYG by others, no independent verification of these has been made by WYG and no warranty is given on them. No liability is accepted or warranty given in relation to the performance, reliability, standing etc of any products, services, organisations or companies referred to in this report.

Whilst reasonable skill and care have been used, no investigative method can eliminate the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise, incomplete or not fully representative information. Any monitoring or survey work undertaken as part of the commission will have been subject to limitations, including for example timescale, seasonal, budget and weather related conditions.

Although care is taken to select monitoring and survey periods that are typical of the environmental conditions being measured, within the overall reporting programme constraints, measured conditions may not be fully representative of the actual conditions. Any predictive or modelling work, undertaken as part of the commission will be subject to limitations including the representativeness of data used by the model and the assumptions inherent within the approach used. Actual environmental conditions are typically more complex and variable than the investigative, predictive and modelling approaches indicate in practice, and the output of such approaches cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive or accurate indicator of future conditions.

The potential influence of our assessment and report on other aspects of any development or future planning requires evaluation by other involved parties.

The performance of environmental protection measures and of buildings and other structures in relation to acoustics, vibration, noise mitigation and other environmental issues is influenced to a large extent by the degree to which the relevant environmental considerations are incorporated into the final design and specifications and the quality of workmanship and compliance with the specifications on site during construction. WYG accept no liability for issues with performance arising from such factors.

August 2015

WYG Environment Planning Transport Ltd