



GMAAS
Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service
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Nick Brookman
Rochdale Borough Council
Economy Directorate
Planning and Development
Number One Riverside
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Rochdale
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Your Ref: PL/2026/0735
Date: 28th August 2026

Archaeological Consultation: PL/2026/0735 – Outline planning application (with all matters reserved other than access) for the construction of two industrial units (Use Classes B2 and B8) together with ancillary office space (Use Class E), with supporting loading bays, trailer bays, trailer park spaces, parking spaces, landscaping, infrastructure and other associated works – Land to the north east of Birch Business Park, Heywood

Dear Nick,

Thank you for consulting GMAAS on this application.

In accordance with NPPF HE5 the application is supported by an assessment of the potential development impacts on archaeological assets that may be found within the site. The assessment comes in the form of an archaeological Desk-based Assessment (DBA) compiled by Orion Heritage in April 2026, but also in a dedicated chapter (15) of an Environmental Statement compiled by WSP (August 2026).

Chapter 15 of the ES essentially reiterates the findings of the DBA, i.e. the site has a background potential to contain evidence of prehistoric activity, and a more widespread potential for post-medieval and industrial remains - but whilst the DBA concludes that a geophysical survey might be required, followed by intrusive evaluation, the ES chapter argues otherwise. The ES argues that given the low potential of the site for including remains from any period except the post-medieval (field boundaries and cottages depicted on historic mapping in the south-western portion of the main site), coupled with extensive groundworks identified on aerial images of the site that have an unknown depth of impact or truncation, a geophysical survey and evaluation would be disproportionate to the sites potential. Archaeological monitoring and recording (AMR, also known as a watching brief) is proposed as an alternative means of mitigating against development impacts to the sites of the former cottages (should they have survived modern groundworks and disturbance), and to allow for the identification and recording of any remains of as yet unknown archaeology that might be encountered beyond the extent of modern truncation to the north-east.

GMAAS agrees that given the extent of previous truncation to the site, a geophysical survey would not be a suitable means of evaluation. A focussed scheme of AMR in the area of the former cottages, and during stripping to facilitate the preparation of areas for the proposed development would be more appropriate. Given that the significance of any surviving archaeological assets within the Site is likely to be of no greater than medium (borough) to low (local) significance, GMAAS would be content for the AMR to be secured via a condition of consent, with an appropriate



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methodology for all fieldwork and post-excavation tasks to be agreed in advance in the form of a Project Design. The condition should be worded as follows:

No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording. The works are to be undertaken in accordance with a Project Design (PD) submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The PD shall cover the following:

- 1. Informed by the North West Regional Research Framework, a phased programme and methodology of investigation and recording to include:
i – archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken during groundworks (including ground clearance, level reductions, excavation of foundation trenches, drainage/service runs etc)**
- 2. A programme for post investigation assessment to include:
i - analysis of the site investigations records and finds
ii - production of a final report on the investigation results.**
- 3. Deposition of the final report with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.**
- 4. Dissemination of the results commensurate with their significance.**
- 5. Provision for archive deposition of the report and records of the site investigation.**
- 6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the approved PD.**

Reason: In accordance with NPPF (August 2026) Section 20, Policy HE10 – The applicant should record and advance understanding of the significance of the asset to be lost in a manner proportionate to its importance and the potential impact upon it; and should make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible by depositing it in the relevant Historic Environment Record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository.

The work should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeological contractor, funded by the applicant, and in accordance with guidance provided by GMAAS who would also monitor the implementation of the works on behalf of Rochdale Council.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Dyson BA MLitt

Senior Planning Archaeologist

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS)

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