

Scope of work

Archaeological Assessment

Site address

Land at Churnet Way, Leek, Staffordshire

Client

McDonald's Restaurant Ltd

Report Ref

HS/mcdonaldsleek/AH691/20/7/22V1

Prepared by

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Date

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APPENDIX 1

Aerial photograph of the PDA, 2001

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1 INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Project Background.

- 1.1.1** Avalon Heritage Ltd (AHL) has been commissioned by McDonald's Restaurants Ltd (*the applicant*) to prepare an Archaeological Assessment (AA) in relation to a planning application for the construction of a new McDonald's Restaurant on land to the north of Mill Street in Leek (the proposed development area, *the PDA*, Figure 1).

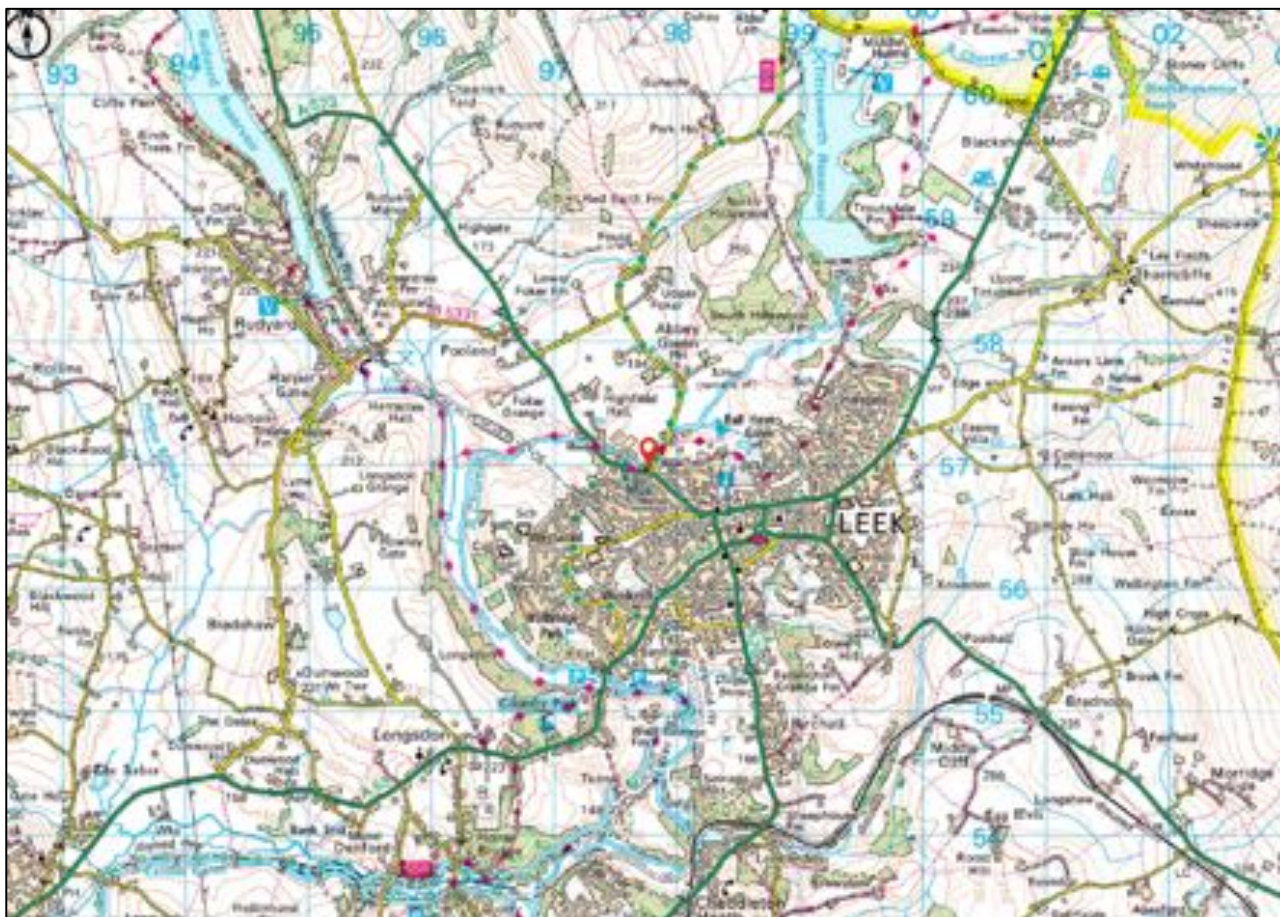


Figure 1. Location map.

- 1.1.2** This report will assess only the potential for below ground archaeological remains within the development footprint and will not consider the significance/settings of above ground designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the PDA.
- 1.1.3** The PDA is located in the northwestern part of Leek, at the bottom of Mill Street within a complex of buildings, carparking and infrastructure developed for a Sainsburys superstore (Figure 2). The Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) does not contain any entries located within the PDA itself but has identified a number of archaeological sites within the area around the PDA where remains dating predominantly from the medieval to the post-medieval periods have been identified. As a consequence of this, the applicant has commissioned an archaeological assessment to support the planning application.



Figure 2. Location of the PDA.

1.1.4 The primary aim of this report is to appraise the character and significance of any potential archaeological remains which may be removed or destroyed by the proposed development so that the LPA/decision maker is appropriately informed when assessing impacts on the significance of those assets from the proposed scheme and when making their planning decision.

1.1.5 This report has been undertaken with reference to guidance prepared by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and Historic England including:

- Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment, Good Practice in Planning 2 Historic England 2015.
- Statements of Heritage Significance: Historic England Advice Note 12 2019.
- Standards and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists CIfA 2014, rev 2017.
- Code of Conduct, CIfA 2014. Rev. 2019;
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments, Historic England 2017.

1.1.6 This HS has also been written in accordance with Chapter 16, *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*, of the NPPF, particularly paragraphs 194 and 195.

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) rev. 2021.

- Planning Practice Guidance 2021.

1.1.7 The following sources have been consulted in the preparation of this report:

- The Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER).
- Online sources including British History Online.
- Historic OS maps online.

1.1.8 A site visit was undertaken by the author of this report in order to assess the significance and condition of the PDA as well as to understand the wider historic environment in which it is located.

1.1.9 This report has been written by Helen Martin-Bacon, B.A., M.A., PgDip., MCIfA and affiliate member of the IHBC. She is the Founder and Principal Heritage Consultant at Avalon Heritage Ltd and has 30 years of experience working within the historic environment specialising in the preparation of Heritage Statements, Archaeological Assessments and Historic Building Assessments within planning led environments.

1.2 Description of the PDA.

1.2.1 The PDA is an irregularly shaped parcel of land bordered to the northwest and northeast by a feeder road to the Sainsbury's superstore and by extensive areas of carparking (Plate 1). To the east and southeast the PDA is delineated by an embankment and terraced ground (Plate 2) whilst to the southwest it is bordered by open land extending to the northern banks of the River Churnet beyond which both modern and historic development along Mill Street is visible from the PDA (Plate 3).

1.2.2 The PDA is generally flat (Plate 4), and its surface is laid down to compacted limestone chippings through which dense ruderal vegetation and shrubbery has grown. Access to the PDA is gained via a gated entrance leading off a traffic island southwest of the superstore car park and the entrance continues as a stoned trackway along the southwestern side of the PDA (Plate 5). It is clear from the stoned-up nature of the PDA that it has been previously flattened and no earthwork features/structural features relating to any former/historical uses of the PDA are visible.



Plate 1. View from the northeastern part of the PDA showing its relationship with the superstore and car parks.



Plate 2. The embankment delineating the eastern and southeastern boundaries of the PDA.



Plate 3. View over the PDA of development along Mill Street.



Plate 4. View from the embankment over the PDA towards Mill Street.



Plate 5. View from the gated entrance of the stoned trackway along the southwestern side of the PDA.

2 BASELINE AND CARTOGRAPHIC DATA.

2.1 Archaeological and Historic Context of the PDA.

- 2.1.1** The origins of Leek are unclear, though the placename has been taken to signify both Saxon and Viking activity in the area. Extant remains of early medieval activity survive at Leek in the form of two stone crosses which stand in St. Edward's churchyard, which have not been securely dated but tentatively attributed to the 9th and 11th centuries. Leek is recorded as a settlement lying at the heart of a large estate in Domesday Book, 1086, and the earliest settlement is likely to have been located near to St. Edward's Church. The latter replaced an earlier church which documentary sources reveal existed by the early 13th century when the town was founded by the Earl of Chester.
- 2.1.2** The foundation of the town involved laying out burgrave plots along the primary streets, Church Street/Stockwell Street, St. Edward's Street and Derby Street. The town was also provided with a large marketplace which was partly built over from the medieval period onwards. The borough and estate of Leek was granted to Dieulacres Abbey in 1232 and the abbey held the manor until the Dissolution.
- 2.1.3** Documentary evidence suggests that there was no planned expansion of Leek during the medieval period, although there is evidence for earlier post-medieval settlement away from the historic core along routes such as the Macclesfield Road, Junction Lane, Ashbourne Road and Buxton Road. The impetus behind this expansion is currently unknown but it may have been associated with the arrival of the silk industry by the later 17th century.
- 2.1.4** The silk industry and later textile working dominated the town from at least the 17th century to the middle of the 20th century and has left a legacy throughout the town of buildings associated with the industry, including humble terraces of weavers' cottages through to impressive large-scale mills. By the 1820s the town was expanding to the east, west and south. Early 19th century expansion may have had earlier origins for instance

along Kiln Lane, adjoining Mill Street southeast of the PDA, and the eastern end of Fountain Street. The expansion was probably driven by the importance of the silk industry to the local economy.

2.1.5 Textile manufacturing continued to be important to Leek's economy for much of the 20th century, but silk production ceased in 1994.

2.2 Leek Historic Character Assessment (Staffordshire EUS).

2.2.1 The PDA is located within *Historic Urban Character Area 19: Brindley's Mill and Bridge End* in the Leek HCA. The most significant heritage asset within HUCA 19 is the watermill (a scheduled monument) on the River Churnet, at the junction of Abbey Green Road and Mill Street, southeast of the PDA. The watermill is likely to have medieval origins, but the extant building was constructed in the 18th century by James Brindley. A diversion of the river into a leat with a sluice and weir was used to power the mill.

2.2.2 The presence of the river provided an impetus to the development of this area from the 19th century onwards for industries including silk/textile production printing and dyeing. A silk mill and dye works were established adjacent to Brindley's Mill by the mid-19th century. The site expanded westwards, particularly with dye works, during the early to mid-20th century.

2.2.3 Two dye works were established, probably in the 19th century, one opposite Brindley Mill on the eastern side of Abbey Green Road and a second at Bridge End to the northwest of the PDA. To the east of the river was the Holm Croft Works which was part of Joshua Wardle's dyeworks where William Morris came to develop his skill in dyeing and where Morris's *Indigo Vats* are thought to be located. Industrial development lying to the north of the river, where the PDA is located, tends to date to the first half of the 20th century.

2.2.4 The dye works at Bridge End lies adjacent to a small area of piecemeal settlement (*HCT Irregular Historic Plots*). The origin of these buildings is currently unknown, but they may relate to workers' or managers' housing associated with the dye works built in the 19th century. Alternatively, they may have earlier origins perhaps originating as one or more farmsteads.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence.

2.3.1 The OS Map of 1825 (Figure 3) depicts the PDA lying in undeveloped land but shows that the area around the PDA was already heavily developed with industrial sites associated with the silk/textile industry by this time. The OS Map of 1898 (Figure 4) presents a similar picture and depicts an undeveloped PDA with dye works located to its south occupying the area between the River Churnet and the Macclesfield Road.

2.3.2 The PDA remained undeveloped for at least the first three decades of the 20th century and the 1925 OS Map (not illustrated) depicts it occupied by a football ground. During this period the 1925 map shows that the area around the PDA had become heavily developed with dye works and silk mills. This continued to be the situation until around 1937 when the OS Map of that date (Figure 5) depicts a large building, part of a dye works, extending across the PDA. By the time of the OS Map 1965 (not illustrated) this building had been extended to occupy the entire PDA. An aerial photograph of the PDA (Appendix 1) taken in 2001 confirms that the PDA was wholly occupied by this building.



Figure 3. Extract from the OS Map dated 1825.



Figure 4. Extract from the OS Map dated 1898.



Figure 5. Extract from the OS Map dated 1937.

2.4 HER Monuments.

2.4.1 Within a radius of 500m from the PDA boundary the HER has identified a number of entries relating to multi-period archaeological sites and historic buildings. These entries are as follows:

- A section of a leat of probable post medieval date, now in the midst of a modern factory site. No evidence of an associated mill identified (MST4045).
- A farmstead with a loose-courtyard plan form and detached farmhouse which existed by the late 19th century (MST18369)
- A mid-18th century turnpike road, the Ashbourne to Leek and Congleton Turnpike road (MST22326).
- A probably late 18th or early 19th century turnpike road which linked the towns of Sandon, Hugbridge, Hilderstone and Draycott-in-the-Moors (MST22379).
- Near the junction of Kiln Lane and Mill Street there is post-medieval evidence of industrial activity including a rock cut chamber, flue and oven and possible associated brick buildings probably associated with mineral workings (MST4123).
- A mission church attached to St. Edward's Church built in 1875 and including a schoolroom (MST1285).
- Listed and scheduled corn mill and associated tail race built in 1752 by James Brindley which ceased operation in 1940 (MST175).
- A listed 18th century stone footbridge spanning the River Churnet (MST6859).
- No. 210 Mill Street, a listed early 18th century inn, later used as a house and now as a club (MST6897).
- Former Wesleyan Chapel and Ragged School, Mill Street built in 1871 (MST18324).

- The Shade Mill, Big Mill Complex built after 1890 (MST12812).
- Site of a possible barrow, known as *Cock Low*, the 6" OS Map of 1955 depicts a small circular contour in the area (MST1833).
- Broad's Bridge, Abbey Green Road, a listed 18th century stone bridge spanning the River Churnet (MST6858).

2.5 Geotechnical Information.

- 2.5.1** A geo-environmental site investigation at the PDA was carried by Ensaf Consultants in 2021. The subsequent report (Ensaf 2022) identified the geology of the PDA as being underlain by bedrock of the Chester Formation comprising sandstone with pebbles overlain by alluvial deposits comprising clay, sands and gravels.
- 2.5.2** The geotechnical site investigation revealed made ground in all exploratory locations from surface level to a maximum of 5.2m bgl. A limestone gravel capping layer was encountered from the ground level to depths of 0.2m to 0.9m bgl over a geotextile membrane which was placed as a separating layer to cover underlying materials. Beneath the membrane the made ground comprised fine materials containing demolition rubble, including bricks, concrete, rebar and plastics.
- 2.5.3** Alluvium was identified between 2m to 14m bgl and generally comprised fine-grained deposits near the surface and coarse-grained materials in the lower boreholes towards the sandstone, with incursions of sand and gravel, possibly associated with historic flooding of the river.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE PDA.

- 3.1.1** No archaeological investigations have been carried out within the boundaries of the PDA and whilst based on the data provided by the HER, the evidence to date suggests low/minimal potential for the presence of sub-surface archaeological remains of prehistoric, Iron Age, Roman or Anglo-Saxon date. It does, however, need to be considered that the PDA's location within the floodplain of the River Churnet may have made the area a focus for activity, if not settlement, during these periods.
- 3.1.2** Although the PDA lies in an area located beyond the medieval core of Leek around the church, it is known that a medieval mill preceded the Brindley Mill, whilst approximately a kilometre to the northwest of the PDA lies the scheduled remains of Dieulacres Abbey. The monks of the abbey were present as early as the 13th century and maintained two mills on the river throughout the medieval period and although their exact location is not known, two mills were recorded to be present off Mill Street during the Reformation of 1538 – 1540.
- 3.1.3** The river, which was an important driver of the later heavily industrialised character of this part of Leek for textile/silk manufacture, printing and dyeing, has likely had its course modified for industrial purposes since at least the medieval period attracting industries such as textile manufacture, fulling, hemp retting or tanning. Industrial activity dating to the earlier part of the post-medieval period may also have characterised the area to the north and south of the river around Mill Street/Macclesfield Road given that the silk industry was present in Leek by the later 17th century. Consequently, there is a higher potential for the PDA to retain archaeological evidence of medieval/post-medieval industrial activity than evidence of activity dating to earlier periods.

- 3.1.4** The cartographic evidence suggests that until at least the 1930s the PDA was located in open, undeveloped land and that until its demolition in the mid-21st century a factory, part of a dye works, occupied the entire PDA. The geotechnical investigation in 2021 encountered the presence of demolition rubble which is likely to date to the demolition of the factory when a levelling layer was probably established across the PDA. It is possible that the construction of the factory in the first half of the 20th century resulted in the removal or severe truncation of any archaeological remains, should they have been present, within the building's foundation level, though pockets of archaeological preservation cannot be discounted.
- 3.1.5** The geotechnical investigation at the PDA identified the presence of alluvium below the factory demolition layer and given the PDA's location on a floodplain, and adjacent to the river, there is the potential for it to contain archaeological/artefactual and palaeoenvironmental evidence either within or beneath alluvial layers below the dig depth of the later factory.
- 3.1.6** In sum, it is considered most likely that the construction and later demolition/site clearance of the 20th century factory which occupied the PDA would have scoured out or substantially disturbed any *in situ* archaeological deposits or features which may have once existed there at higher levels. However, the presence at the PDA of alluvial layers at depths bgl of 2m to 14m may offer the prospect of surviving multi-period archaeological/artefactual and/or palaeoenvironmental material, as well as of historic river channels, within the alluvial matrix or sealed beneath it.
- 3.1.7** It is considered most likely that any *in situ* archaeological/artefactual/palaeoenvironmental remains within the boundaries of the PDA would be of local significance and that they could throw a valuable light on the development of Leek and its immediate environs potentially from the prehistoric period onwards.

4 CONCLUSION.

- 4.1.1** The proposal is to develop a McDonald's restaurant and drive through with associated parking and landscaping at the PDA. The development will be limited to the flat area of the PDA and will not encroach on the curved embankment marking the eastern limits of the PDA.
- 4.1.2** It has been established through desk-based research that the PDA has suffered considerable ground disturbance during the construction of the former factory in the first part of the 20th century and similarly, site clearance and levelling works when the factory was demolished is likely to have removed or substantially truncated any archaeological remains present within the levels of disturbance, though islands of preservation cannot be entirely ruled out¹. There is a possibility that archaeological/artefactual/palaeoenvironmental material is preserved below the level of ground disturbance for the former factory where alluvial deposits at depth have been identified by the geotechnical investigation.
- 4.1.3** Remediation work and/or foundation formation for the new build, dependent upon their nature and depth, could disturb archaeological/palaeoenvironmental deposits which survive at the PDA. However, the formation levels for the carparking areas and the drive through are unlikely to extend beyond the depth of the former

¹ It is not known whether structural elements of the factory's floors/foundations were left *in situ* when the site was levelled but the geotechnical investigation encountered obstructions such as concrete cobble and concrete slab at depths of between 0.3m to 1.5m in parts of the PDA.

factory dig depth/levelling layer and consequently would not cause disturbance to any *in situ* archaeological/palaeoenvironmental remains at lower levels. A programme of archaeological evaluation may be necessary to verify the stratigraphy of the PDA identified by the geotechnical investigations, to establish the presence or absence of archaeological/palaeoenvironmental remains and to inform on potential levels of disturbance to any surviving archaeological resource from the development.

- 4.1.4** Based upon the evidence reviewed in the preparation of this report it is considered highly unlikely that any archaeological remains present within the footprint of the PDA would be of more than local significance and that the presence of remains of national significance, which might preclude development, is remote.
- 4.1.5** Avalon Heritage is supportive of the proposals but the potential for the presence of archaeological/palaeoenvironmental remains at the PDA should be a consideration during the LPA's decision-making process. Details of formation levels/foundation design for the proposed development can be used in conjunction with the results of an archaeological evaluation to identify possible impacts, or rule them out and, in the case of the former, draw up an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy.
- 4.1.6** On behalf of the applicant, this AA has fulfilled its role of providing the LPA/decision maker with a sufficient and proportionate level of information for the decision-making process by describing the archaeological potential of the PDA and assessing the likely significance of any buried archaeological remains surviving there. It is anticipated, therefore, that the LPA/decision maker will be able to come to a balanced judgement about the proposed scheme as well as being able to form their view on whether the scheme will constitute no harm, less than substantial harm or substantial harm to the significance of the archaeological resource discussed in this report, as required by NPPF.

5 REFERENCES

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance, Historic England 2008.

The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3, Historic England 2015 London.

Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment, Good Practice in Planning 2, Historic England 2015.

Statements of Heritage Significance: Historic England Advice Note 12 2019.

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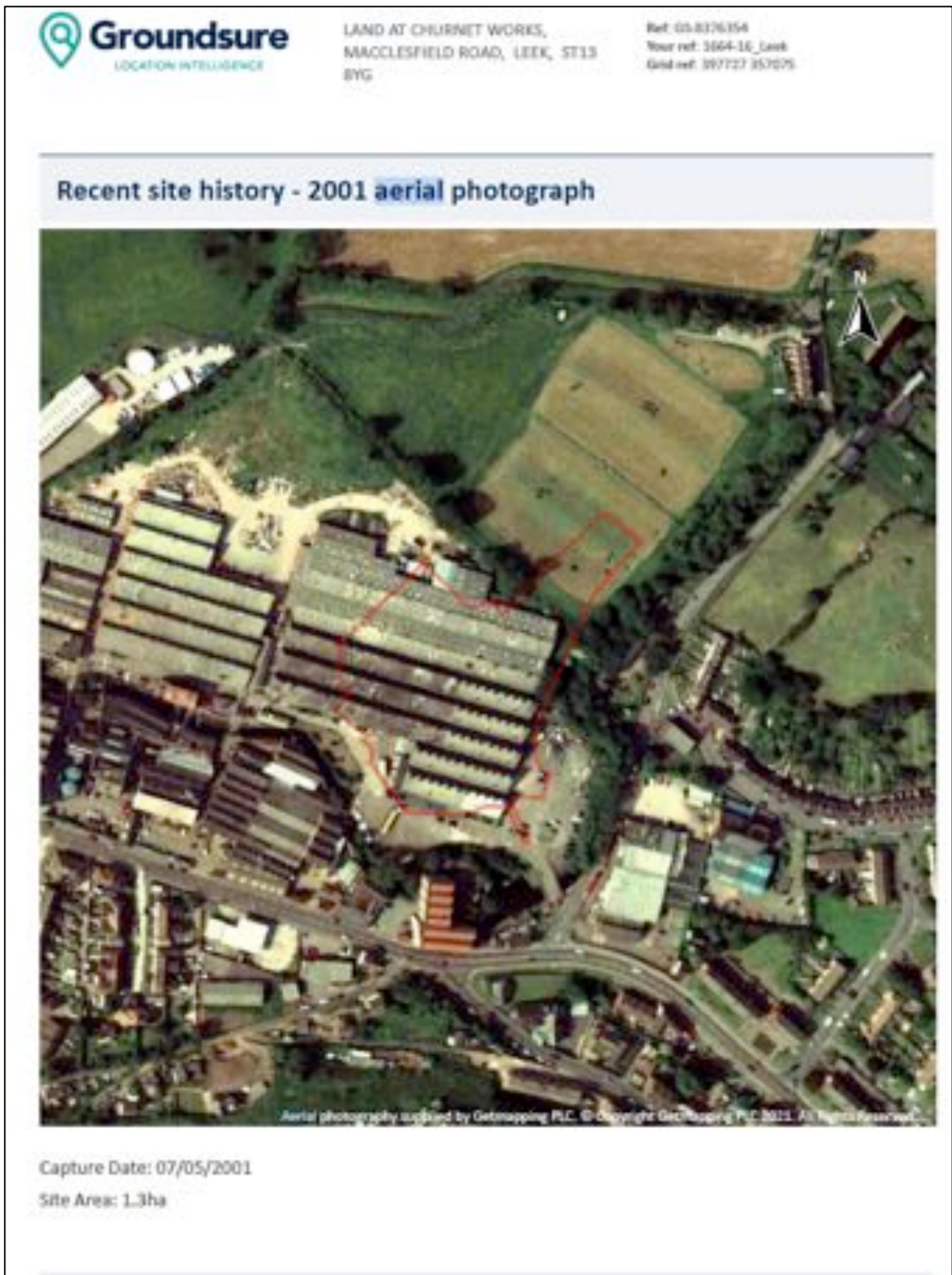
National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF 2012 rev, 2021.

Planning Practice Guide, rev 2021.

Phase II Geo-Environmental Site Investigation, Ensaf Consultants Report No. 1664-16, 2022.

Leek Historic Character Assessment, Staffordshire EUS, Staffordshire County Council 2012.

APPENDIX 1



Reproduced from the geotechnical report. The redline boundary has changed since the report was prepared but the image still demonstrates the entire PDA covered with the building.

HERITAGE SERVICES.

- Constraints reports and heritage risk assessments for land acquisition.
- Heritage Impact Assessments.
- Statements of Significance.
- Setting Assessments.
- Listed Building Appraisals.
- Historic Building Survey and Recording.
- Places of worship.
- Historic agricultural buildings.
- Desk-Based Assessments.
- Historic Landscape Survey.
- Analysis of historic and designed gardens.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES.

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- Preparation of WSIs and mitigation strategies.
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- Consultancy and advice.
- Co-ordination of fieldwork.
- Procurement.

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