

Ashton Roman small town north east of Oundle

Overview

Heritage Category:

Scheduled Monument

List Entry Number:

1021454

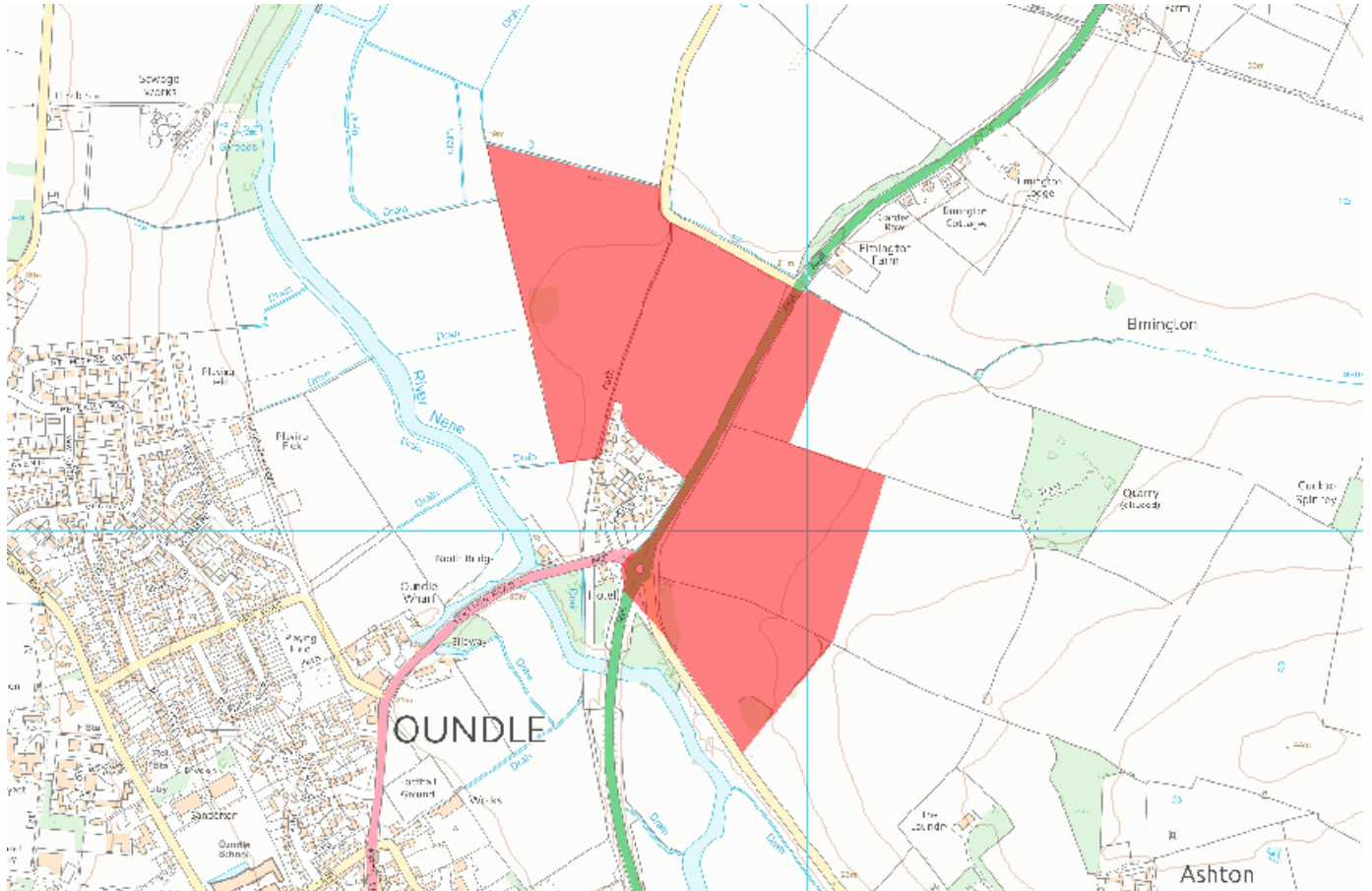
Date first listed:

02-Jan-1976

Date of most recent amendment:

28-Sep-2010

Map



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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1021454.pdf](#)

The PDF will be generated from our live systems and may take a few minutes to download depending on how busy our servers are. We apologise for this delay.

This copy shows the entry on 28-Jul-2020 at 13:43:08.

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

Northamptonshire

District:

East Northamptonshire (District Authority)

Parish:

Ashton

National Grid Reference:

TL 04793 88929

Reasons for Designation

Five types of town are known to have existed in Roman Britain: *coloniae*, *municipia*, *civitas* capitals, Roman provincial capitals and Roman small towns. The first four types can be classified as 'public towns' because each had an official status within the provincial administrative system. Roman small towns are settlements of urban character which lack the administrative status of public towns, but which are nevertheless recognisably urban in terms of morphology, features and function. They tend to lack the planned rectangular street grids, public buildings and well-appointed town houses of the public towns and instead are generally characterised by mainly insubstantial timber or half-timbered structures. Some small towns possess an enclosing wall, while others have masonry or earthwork defences. Additional features include temples, bath houses, ovens, kilns and cemeteries. Roman small towns began to emerge in the mid-first century AD. However, the majority of examples appeared in the later first and second centuries, while the third and fourth centuries saw the growth and development of existing establishments, together with the emergence of a small number of new ones. Some small towns had their origins in earlier military sites such as *fort-vici* and developed into independent urban areas following the abandonment of the forts. Others developed alongside major roads and were able to exploit a wide range of commercial opportunities as a result of their location. There are a total of 133 Roman small towns recorded in England. These are mainly concentrated in the Midlands and central southern England. Some examples have survived as undeveloped 'greenfield' sites and consequently possess particularly well-preserved archaeological remains.

Ashton is an important example of an undefended Roman small town whose main significance seems to have lain in its location at a key river crossing, possibly close to an existing important late Iron Age site. Much of the core of the settlement is still intact. The archaeological documentation in the form of excavation records, aerial photographs and field survey evidence provide one of the most comprehensive sets of information about the layout and architecture of a small town in the region. The artefactual information in the form of pottery, metalwork and coinage could contribute significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the economy of small towns, particularly given the longevity of occupation on the site. It can also add to our understanding of the place Ashton held in the wider landscape and the social and economic dynamics between different settlements.

Details

The monument includes the buried remains of Ashton Roman settlement which lies to the east of the River Nene and around the north, east and west of the former Oundle Station. The settlement is located roughly midway between *Durobrivae*, the largest small town in Roman Britain, and Titchmarsh. The monument is evident as a complex series of cropmarks covering a number of fields in an area of approximately 15ha. The settlement has been the subject of two systematic field surveys, extensive excavations along the route of the A605, and has good aerial photographic coverage. Collectively this evidence provides considerable information about the form and function of the settlement. Ashton Roman Settlement dates from the mid to late C1 AD when a system of rectangular ditched enclosures and associated drove ways was laid out running north east to south west towards the river. The main axial route was formalised into a road by the close of the C1 or early C2 and formed the basic framework around which all subsequent activity focussed. The main axial route appears to lead to a crossing of the River Nene but the absence of significant archaeological investigation along the flood plain to date means there is as yet no evidence for the crossing itself. The nature of the settlement around the roadways changes over time. In the first century the settlement pattern is unclear with only two round houses having been identified. In the C2 however a number of rectangular stone buildings were built and the settlement appears more densely occupied. During the course of the mid-C2 and mid-C3, construction of a series of stone founded strip buildings gradually filled the road frontage with simple shops, workshops and houses particularly associated with iron smithing. Towards the southern fringe of the settlement a series of enclosures probably defined small agricultural plots, quarrying areas and stock yards. During the C4 the road side plots became important foci for a range of inhumation-based burial traditions both along boundaries and in a formal cemetery. Evidence from the burial ground indicates it was home to a significant Christian community in the later C4. Evidence for craft production and the study of trade is abundant at Ashton. There is evidence of small scale pottery production towards the western fringe of the town but a more significant element in the town's economy was iron smithing with clear evidence in the form of an anvil, hammers, chisel, secondary furnaces and much hammer scale from a number of buildings along the road front. Most of this evidence appears to be late C2 to C4 AD. Occupation

continued into the early C5 but the absence of early Middle Saxon material from anywhere within the settlement suggests that the small town was soon abandoned after the end of Roman rule, possibly to a new location across the river at Oundle where Early to Middle Saxon activity is recorded, and which appears to have functioned as an administrative centre in the Middle Saxon period. All modern fences, path surfaces and roads are excluded from the scheduling although the ground beneath all these features is included.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:

35630

Legacy System:

RSM

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

End of official listing

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