

High Speed 2: London Borough of Hillingdon

Site type: Greenfield

Fieldwork: MOLA-Headland, Archaeology Wales and Wessex Archaeology
(2018 - 2022)

GLHER Records: [Desk-based Assessment at Colne Valley East](#)

[Geophysical Survey at Dews Farm](#)

[Evaluation at Dews Farm](#)

[Evaluation at Southern Sustainable Placement Areas G and H](#)

(Note: only selected HS2 archaeology reports are listed)

Proposed scheme

Construction of the High Speed 2 London to Birmingham railway required extensive engineering works on agricultural land and a golf course between the Ruislip Tunnel Portal and the Colne Valley Viaduct.

Archaeological response

The Colne Valley has long been known to contain well-preserved Mesolithic sites as well as more recent archaeology. Historic landscape research requested by GLAAS revealed a medieval and early modern pattern of dispersed settlement, woodland and assarting. A National Nature Reserve was identified as a possible deerpark belonging to the Knights Hospitaller.

High Speed 2 conducted geophysical surveys over a large area of mainly clay (Lambeth Group and London Clay) geologies with largely negative results. This was followed up by trial trenching and selected mitigation areas.

Outcomes

Trial trenching confirmed generally low levels of archaeology allowing large areas to be 'de-scoped' from archaeological mitigation. It did find evidence for medieval woodland industry and, on the edge of the Colne Valley a scatter of Mesolithic occupation along a stream in a location predicted to have high potential based on previous experience along the valley. The latter included a well-preserved 'camp site' with postholes and small pits suggestive of a small settlement with structures. This site was preserved by relocating a wildlife pond.

A metal-detecting survey was carried out when a Celtic coin hoard was unexpectedly discovered in a trial trench.

The case highlights the need to understand topography and patterns of historic land use targeting investigations accordingly and recognising historic landscape significance. It illustrates that large sites, even if of perceived low archaeological potential, can produce significant unexpected discoveries and that negative geophysical survey results must be treated with caution on unfavourable geologies or where hard to detect archaeology may be present. The pond redesign requirement showed why evaluation should be carried out early enough not to disrupt scheme design.



Copyright GLAAS