**Application no: 17/02534/OUT**

**Location:** Land North Of Bicester Avenue Garden Centre Oxford Road Bicester

**Archaeology Schedule**

**Recommendation:**

Objection for the following reason/s:

The site is located in an area of archaeological interest and the results of an archaeological evaluation will need to be submitted along with this planning application prior to the determination of this application.

**Comments:**

The site is located in an area of archaeological interest as shown by an archaeological evaluation over part of the site which recorded a range of archaeological deposits dating from the prehistoric to Roman periods. The site is located 650m north of the site of the Roman Small Town of Alchester and is located along the line of the Roman Road heading north from this town. Iron Age and Roman settlement evidence has been recorded along the route of this road in the vicinity of this site including 300m south and 260m north east of the proposed site. A further Iron Age and Roman settlement has also been recorded 280m north of the site.

Prehistoric archaeological deposits have been recorded in the immediate area and two Bronze Age barrows are recorded 280m north east of the proposed site. The proposed site is also located immediately to the south and west of an area of Bronze Age settlement identified through archaeological excavation.

This excavation revealed a number of Bronze Age roundhouses either side of a braided river channel. An oven was also recorded associated with one of the roundhouses along with a number of larger postholes or pits. Three cremation burials were also recorded on the site. A Roman channel was cut along the line of the braided channel. Bronze Age settlement sites such as this are relatively rare within the District and as such are of significance.

Only part of the proposed site was subject to an archaeological evaluation undertaken as part of a separate planning application. The area that was not investigated is immediately east of the line of the Roman road and immediately south of the area of Bronze Age settlement recorded by the excavation. It is therefore very likely that further aspects of this significant settlement could survive within this previously un-investigated area of the proposed development and archaeological deposits from the Roman period could survive along the line of the road as recorded elsewhere in the vicinity.

This is recognised in the submitted EIA which states in 10.64 that,

‘*It is likely these remains will extend somewhat beyond the trenching area and therefore the potential for further prehistoric and Roman finds or features is considered high*.’

The EIA sets out proposed mitigation for the site. This mitigation only proposes to undertake a strip map and recording action within areas where the previous evaluation recorded archaeological deposits (10.73). The remaining area of the site, presumably including the portion of the site that was not subject to this evaluation, would only be subject to a topsoil watching brief.

As this includes the area that is likely to contain further aspects of the identified Bronze Age settlement as well as any previously unidentified Roman settlement along the line of the Roman road this proposed mitigation would not be appropriate.

A programme of archaeological evaluation will need to be undertaken on this un-investigated part of the site ahead of the determination of any planning application for the site in order to identify whether or not archaeological deposits related to the Bronze Age settlement and Roman road survive and to provide the information required to assess the significance of any surviving archaeological deposits.

The EIA also states that we were asked whether or not any archaeological investigations could be conditioned on the 15th August 2017 (10.9). The EIA states that a decision is awaited. This is not true and we responded to this email on the 18th August 2017 to Nuala C. Woodley of AOC where we stated,

‘*I cannot agree that this can simply be undertaken as a condition on any planning application and I certainly do not agree with your proposal that the areas which have not been evaluated can be dealt with through a watching brief*.’

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), we would therefore recommend that, **prior to the determination** of this application the applicant should therefore be responsible for the implementation of an archaeological field evaluation. This must be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation and should aim to define the character and extent of the archaeological remains within the application area, and thus indicate the weight which should be attached to their preservation.

This information can be used for identifying potential options for minimising or avoiding damage to the archaeology and on this basis, an informed and reasonable decision can be taken.

This evaluation must be undertaken in line with an agreed written scheme of investigation as set out in the CIfA standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2014, para 3.1.11). We will need to produce a design brief which will set out the requirements for this evaluation.

**Planning Conditions:**

In the event that permission is to be given, the following planning conditions should be attached:

**Officer’s Name:** Richard Oram

**Officer’s Title:** Planning Archaeologist

**Date:11th January 2018**