

# Catalyst Bicester Bicester Oxfordshire

*Heritage Desk-Based Assessment*



*Report prepared for:*  
Quod

*on behalf of*  
Albion Land Limited

CA Project: MK0187

CA Report: MK0187\_1

March 2020



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## *Heritage Desk-Based Assessment*

CA Project: MK0187

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date	March 2020
issue	1

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## SUMMARY

**Project Name:** Catalyst Bicester

**Location:** Bicester, Oxfordshire

**NGR:** 457498 220957

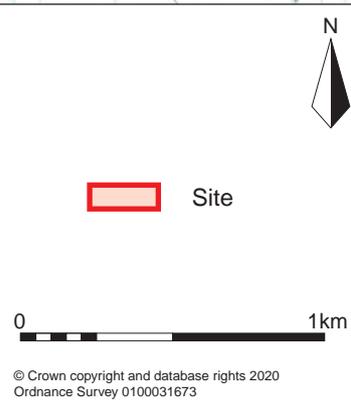
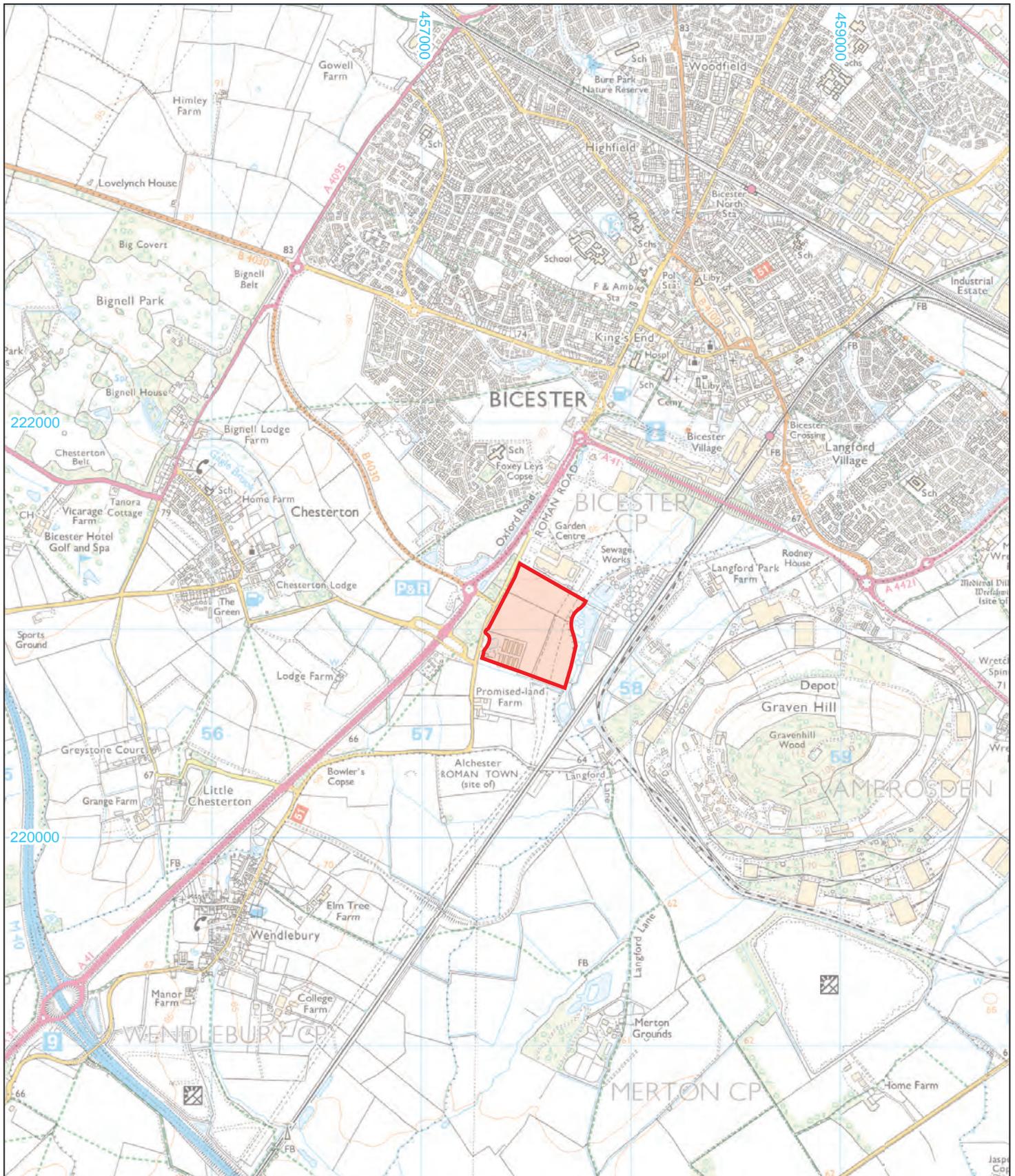
In January 2020 Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Quod on behalf of Albion Land Limited to produce an updated Heritage Desk-Based Assessment, in response to feedback from the Oxfordshire County Council Planning Archaeologist (OCCPA), in respect of land to the east of Wendlebury Road, known as Catalyst Bicester, Oxfordshire, to support two planning applications for commercial led development of the Site. The Site, with exception of the Faccenda chicken farm, is allocated for development (Bicester 10) as part of the Cherwell Local Plan, 2011 - 2031. The Alchester Site Scheduled Monument was designation prior to the allocation of the Site for development. This Assessment follows geophysical survey and trial trenching.

Archaeological remains of later prehistoric and Roman date were recorded within the Site during the trial trenching. These remains were concentrated within the northern and western part of the Site, comprising evidence for Roman land management with evidence of funerary activity (cremation burials) of possible later prehistoric to Roman date. The burials were situated within a single trench in the west of the Site. The character of the Site is a very peripheral competent of the heritage significance of the buried remains, therefore, the change of character will not be a material impact considering the already acknowledged loss of evidential value.

To the south of the Site lie the remains of the Roman Town of Alchester and its associated agricultural hinterland and other features such as a military parade ground and marching camp. These buried remains are designated as scheduled monuments and the northern extent of the scheduled area extends to abut the southern extent of the Site. The remains of the Roman period land management systems discovered within the Site are associated with the agricultural hinterland of the Roman Town. The association with the wider extant and buried remains of the Roman Town increases the evidential value (significance) of the remains within the Site; however, they are not of such significance to warrant scheduling or preservation in situ. A programme of archaeological mitigation fieldwork to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority Planning Archaeologist, and undertaken in advance of construction would be an industry standard and proportionate strategy.

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The development proposals will result in a notable change of character to the Site. However, the presence of built form within the Site will not affect the way one experiences the heritage significance of the buried remains of the former Roman Town and its immediate environs (within the scheduled areas). The heritage significance of the remains and the reason for its designation as a scheduled monument is the evidential value and the Site (and the scheduled areas to its immediate south) possess no features or character to signify the presence of what is buried below ground. An exception is the specific location of the former defended area of the Town. Here, the outline of the extant field boundaries, lane and earthwork allow a well-informed observer to recognise the former presence of the walls and defences; however, at this location, the Site (and proposed development) is far removed from any aspect or view so as to render the change imperceptible.





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**PROJECT TITLE**  
Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire

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**FIGURE TITLE**  
Site location plan

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DRAWN BY GB	PROJECT NO. MK0187	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY DJB	DATE 30/01/2020	
APPROVED BY SM	SCALE@A4 1:25,000	<b>1</b>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In January 2020, Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Quod on behalf of Albion Land Limited to produce an updated Heritage Desk-Based Assessment, in response to feedback from the Oxfordshire County Council Planning Archaeologist (OCCPA), in respect of land to the east of Wendlebury Road, known as Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). The Site, with exception of the Faccenda chicken farm, is allocated for development as part of the Cherwell Local Plan, 2011 – 2031 (Cherwell District Council 2015). The Alchester Site Scheduled Monument was known of at time of allocation. The Site comprises grassland, presently under pasture (photo 1) and Faccenda chicken farm and adjoining property Lakeside Bungalow in the south-west corner. It is located to the east of the A41 'Oxford Road' and Wendlebury Road, c. 1.5km to the south of Bicester and c.15km to the north of Oxford (NGR: 457498 220957; Fig. 1). Commercial developments comprising Bicester Avenue Garden Centre and King Acre Landscaping Centre Bicester are situated to the north of the Site, partitioned only by an un-named private track leading to a Thames Water waste water and sewage treatment works to the north-east. Open land comprising fields in pasture lie to the south and east of the Site.
- 1.2. Two planning applications (*19/1740/HYBRID* and *19/1746/OUT*) were submitted in respect of the Site in August 2019. These allow for recreational facilities comprising a health and racquets club and broadly defined commercial development along with access roads and landscaping. At present, there are two possible masterplans, Masterplan Scenario 02 and Masterplan Scenario 04 (Appendix 2).



**Photo 1 View within the northern part of the Site to the south-west**

### ***Objectives and professional standards***

- 1.3. The composition and development of the historic environment within the Site and wider landscape are discussed in this report. A determination of the significance of any heritage assets located within the Site, and any heritage assets beyond the Site boundary that may potentially be affected by the development proposals, is presented. Any potential development effects upon the significance of these heritage assets (both adverse and/or beneficial) are then described.
  
- 1.4. This updated Assessment was commissioned following the submission of planning applications *19/1740/HYBRID* and *19/1746/OUT* to address formal feedback provided to the client by the Oxfordshire County Council Planning Archaeologist (OCCPA), Richard Oram and the Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England (IAMHE), David Wilkinson. This Assessment is informed by the results of a geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys 2018) and an archaeological trial trench evaluation (CA 2019) carried out within the Site prior to submission of the planning applications.

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1.5. Cotswold Archaeology (CA) is a Registered Organisation (RO) with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). This report has been prepared in accordance with appropriate standards and guidance, including the ‘Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment’ published by CIfA in 2014 and updated in 2017 (CA 2017). This states that, insofar as they relate to the determination of planning applications, heritage desk-based assessments should:

*‘...enable reasoned proposals and decisions to be made [as to] whether to mitigate, offset or accept without further intervention [any identified heritage] impact’ (CIfA 2017, 4).*

1.6. The ‘Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment’ (Historic England 2015a), further clarifies that a desk-based assessment should:

*‘...determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area, and the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment, or will identify the need for further evaluation’ (Historic England 2015a, 3).*

1.7. This assessment has also been undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (CA 2020) as requested by the OCCPA Richard Oram. The WSI set out the scope and methodology of this Heritage Desk-Based Assessment. The WSI was initially submitted to Richard Oram for comment and approval and it was subsequently forwarded to the IAMHE, David Wilkinson by the OCCPA and the Principal Planning Officer (PPO) at CDC, Bernadette Owens for comment and approval prior to the Assessment being undertaken. Both the OCCPA and the IAMHE raised queries in respect of the settings assessment relating to their earlier formal feedback and request for visualisations. However, Quod had previously agreed with the PPO at Cherwell District Council (CDC), Bernadette Owens that visualisations would not be required. It is understood that David Wilkinson will provide further feedback to the PPO at CDC, Bernadette Owens. This feedback had not been made available to Cotswold Archaeology at the time of producing this report.

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### *Statute, policy and guidance context*

- 1.8. The Site is located in the local authority of CDC. This assessment has been undertaken within the key statute, policy and guidance context presented within Table 1.1. The applicable provisions contained within these statute, policy and guidance documents are referred to, and discussed, as relevant, throughout the text. Fuller detail is provided in Appendix 1.

### *Consultation*

- 1.9. Following initial consultation (by email) with the OCCPA, it was established a Heritage Desk-Based Assessment comprising an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Settings Assessment was required. In pre-application advice feedback (19/00069/PREAPP) dated the 15th April 2019 the Planning Archaeologist advised that a Desk-Based Assessment would be needed to inform the planning application. In his feedback the Planning Archaeologist stated that the assessment would need to address, *'the significance of these archaeological features identified on the site and in context of features recorded within its environs. The desk based assessment will also need to assess the impact of this development on the significance of these assets and on the setting of the scheduled monument (Oram 2019a pers comm).'*
- 1.10. Subsequently, Richard Oram commented on the application (19/01740/HYBRID) on the 2nd October 2019 and raised an objection advising, *'following the agreement of these evaluation reports, we were then consulted on a further pre application consultation for the site in April 2019 (19/00069/PREAPP) where we recommended that the results of these investigations would need to be incorporated into the desk based assessment. We also advised that the desk based assessment would need to assess the impact of any development on these identified heritage assets and on the setting of the scheduled monument (Oram 2019b pers comm).'* Similarly, the Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England (IAMHE), David Wilkinson commented on the application (19/01740/HYBRID) by letter dated the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and raised an objection, advising that *'you should not determine the application until further information has been submitted (Wilkinson 2019 pers.comm).'*
- 1.11. Following the completion of an archaeological trial trench evaluation within the Site (CA 2019), Richard Oram approved the evaluation report in April 2019. Subsequently, CA was contacted by Quod in November 2019 in respect of the

formal feedback on the planning applications provided to the client by Richard Oram and David Wilkinson, as set out above. This assessment has been undertaken to address the consultee responses and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), formalising the adopted scope and methodology (CA 2020).

Statute	Description
<b>Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)</b>	Act of Parliament providing for the maintenance of a schedule of archaeological remains of the highest significance, affording them statutory protection.
<b>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)</b>	Act of Parliament placing a duty upon the Local Planning Authority (or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State) to afford due consideration to the preservation of Listed Buildings and their settings (under Section 66(1)), and Conservation Areas (under Section 72(2)), in determining planning applications.
<b>National Heritage Act 1983 (amended 2002)</b>	One of four Acts of Parliament providing for the protection and management of the historic environment, including the establishment of the Historic Monuments & Buildings Commission, now Historic England.
<b>Conservation Principles (English Heritage 2008)</b>	Guidance for assessing heritage significance, with reference to contributing heritage values, in particular: <i>evidential</i> (archaeological), <i>historical</i> (illustrative and associative), <i>aesthetic</i> , and <i>communal</i> .
<b>National Planning Policy Framework (2019)</b>	Provides the English government's national planning policies and describes how these are expected to be applied within the planning system. Heritage is subject of Chapter 16 (page 54).
<b>National Planning Practice Guidance (updated July 2019)</b>	Guidance supporting the National Planning Policy Framework.
<b>Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 2 (GPA2): Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015a)</b>	Provides useful information on assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.
<b>Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 (GPA3): The Setting of Heritage Assets, Second Edition (Historic England, 2017)</b>	Provides guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas, and landscapes.
<b>Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Cherwell District Council 2015)</b>	Comprises the local development plan (local plan), as required to be compiled, published and maintained by the local authority, consistent with the requirements of the NPPF (2019). Intended to be the primary planning policy document against which planning proposals within that local authority jurisdiction are assessed. Where the development plan is found to be inadequate, primacy reverts to the NPPF (2019).

**Table 1.1** Key statute, policy and guidance

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### *Data collection, analysis and presentation*

- 2.1. This assessment has been informed by a proportionate level of information sufficient to understand the archaeological potential of the Site, the significance of identified heritage assets, and any potential development effects. This approach is in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF (MHCLG 2019) and the guidance issued by ClfA (2017). The data has been collected from a wide variety of sources, summarised in Table 2.1.

Source	Data
<b>Sources of fieldwork carried out within the Site</b>	A geophysical survey carried out in 2018 (Archaeological Surveys 2018) and programme of excavation and evaluation carried out in 1983 and 2019 ( Foreman and Rahtz 1983; CA 2019)
<b>National Heritage List for England (NHLE)</b>	Current information relating to designated heritage assets, and heritage assets considered to be 'at risk'.
<b>Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER)</b>	Heritage sites and events records, Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data, and other spatial data supplied in digital format (shapefiles) and hardcopy.
<b>Oxfordshire History Centre</b>	Historic mapping, historic documentation, and relevant published and grey literature.
<b>Defra Data Services Platform (environment.data.gov.uk)</b>	LiDAR imagery and point cloud data, available from the Defra Data Services Platform
<b>Genealogist, Envirocheck, National Library of Scotland &amp; other cartographic websites</b>	Historic (Ordnance Survey and Tithe) mapping in digital format.
<b>British Geological Survey (BGS) website</b>	UK geological mapping (bedrock & superficial deposits) & borehole data.

**Table 2.1** Key data sources

- 2.2. As detailed in Section 2.5 this Desk-Based Assessment has been produced following a geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys 2018) and an archaeological trial trench evaluation (CA 2019) within the Site. It also follows an earlier Desk-Based Assessment prepared by CA in 2016 (CA 2016a) for the Site and land to the west known as Bicester Gateway Phases 1a and 1b as shown on Figure 9. This assessment utilises information derived from the earlier data searches, in keeping with the advice from Richard Oram, as detailed in the WSI (CA 2020).

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2.3. This Desk-Based Assessment has considered a study area of 1km radius, centred on the Site (Figs.2-5). The size of the study area ensured that data sources provided sufficient contextual information about the Site, and its surrounding landscape, from which to assess known and potential impacts on the heritage resource. Known heritage assets within the study area are discussed in Section 4. The assets relevant to this assessment are referred to in the text by a unique reference number **1, 2** etc. for archaeological records, as shown on Figures 3 to 5, and **A – F** for designated heritage assets as shown on Figure 2, all of which are listed in Appendix 3. Assets listed in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record not relevant to this assessment have not been illustrated; these are listed in Appendix 4.

2.4. A site visit was also undertaken as part of this assessment on 24th January 2020 in overcast, damp weather conditions. The primary objectives of the site visit were to assess the Site's historic landscape context, including its association with any known or potential heritage assets, and to identify any evidence for previous truncation of the on-site stratigraphy. The site visit also allowed for the identification of any previously unknown heritage assets within the Site, and an assessment of their nature, condition, significance and potential susceptibility to impact. The wider landscape was examined, as relevant, from accessible public rights of way. The two Scheduled Monuments comprising Alchester Roman site (1006365 and Alchester Roman parade ground, access road and marching camp (1443650 to the south and south-east of the Site were assessed from public rights of way and from within the Site.

#### *Previous archaeological investigations*

2.5. A large number of archaeological excavations and evaluations have been carried out in the study area. Those most pertinent to this assessment are illustrated on Figs.3 to5 and the results of which are listed in Appendix 3. Additionally, Figures 8 to11 illustrate the results of fieldwork carried out within the Site. Key investigations referenced in this report include:

#### **Fieldwork within the Site**

- A Geophysical survey of the Site was carried out by Archaeological Surveys in November 2018 (Archaeological Surveys 2018). The survey identified linear and discrete anomalies within the western part of the Site interpreted as archaeological remains (Fig.9). The results of the survey indicated the

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presence of linear and discrete anomalies inferred as archaeology (Archaeological Surveys 2018).

- An Archaeological Evaluation of the Site was carried out by CA in March 2019 (CA2). The evaluation comprised 57 trenches, 29 of which revealed no archaeological remains (Fig. 10, 11). As shown on Figures 10 to 11, no archaeological remains, aside from one palaeochannel were recorded within the east and south-east of the Site. Trenches within the northern and western part of the Site revealed evidence for Roman landscape management and funerary activity of possible later prehistoric or Roman date. An excavation was carried out in the south-west of the Site in 1983 prior to the construction of the Faccenda chicken farm (Fig. 3, 19; Foreman and Rahtz et al 1983).

#### Fieldwork within the study area

- An evaluation was carried out to the immediate west of the Site (in the area known as Bicester Gateway Phase 1a and Phase 1b) by CA in November 2016 (Fig. 4, CA4). The evaluation identified evidence for the Roman activity spanning the 1st to 4th centuries (CA 2016b).
- An excavation of land to the west of the Site in 1991 (Fig. 3, 11a-c; Oxford Archaeology 2002) revealed evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity. This included an area of land immediately adjacent to the south-western corner of the Site.
- An evaluation at Wendlebury Road, Phase 2 (Lewis 2010) (Fig. 3, 17;), to the west of the Site revealed evidence for Roman activity.
- Excavations, geophysical surveys and aerial photograph interpretation projects have been conducted within the study area, in particular including Alchester Roman Site (Fig. 2 and 4, 10, 11, 20, 21, 30), immediately to the south of the proposed development Site. These identified cropmarks and earthworks indicative of Roman period activity.

2.6. Excavations, trial trench, evaluations, a topographical survey and an aerial photograph interpretation project were carried out in respect of land to the south-west of Bicester (LSWB), approximately 300m to the north-west of the Site (Fig. 3, 4

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and 5, 5a-5e; Wessex Archaeology 2009). These have revealed evidence for prehistoric and Roman period activity.

### Aerial photographs held at Historic England Archives

- 2.1. A list of aerial photographs held at Historic England that illustrate the Site and study area were previously consulted in 2016 (CA 2016). The National Mapping Programme carried out by the RCHME (Stoerts 1998) recorded the location of cropmarks (Fig. 4), shown in detail on Fig. 9.

### LiDAR imagery

- 2.2. Existing Environment Agency (EA) Lidar data was analysed with the specific aim of clarifying the extent of any potential archaeological remains and is shown on Figure 6 to 8.
- 2.3. EA Lidar DTM tiles were obtained from the Defra Data Services Platform (environment.data.gov.uk), under the Open Government Licence v3.0. The data was available at 1m resolution, surveyed in 2003, for the area of the Site and its immediate surroundings. DTM tiles were downloaded in ASCII (.asc) format, with each .asc file covering an area measuring 100x100m-square. EA state that their specifications for Lidar data require absolute height error to be less than +/-15cm, and relative error to be less than +/-5cm (EA, 2016). The planar accuracy of the data is guaranteed to +/- 40cm (absolute), while relative planar accuracy depends on the altitude of the survey aircraft but can generally be said to be +/-20cm (ibid.).
- 2.4. The Lidar .asc files contain British National Grid as the “native” coordinate reference system.
- 2.5. Where necessary, the DTM tiles were combined into a mosaic raster dataset using Esri ArcGIS 10.5.1 and exported as a .TIFF
- 2.6. The resulting .TIFF was then processed using Relief Visualisation Toolbox (RVT) (Kokalj et al 2019 and Zakšek et al 2011) to create a number of visualisations including a multi-direction hillshade and local relief model following Historic England guidelines (HE 2010) and guidance in *Airbourne Laser Scanning Raster Visualisation: A guide to good practice* (Kokalj & Hesse 2017). The parameters were set to those appropriate for the topography of the area, which is relatively flat at approximately 65m Above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

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2.7. The output images from the RVT software were then imported into the ArcMap 10.5.1 where further settings manipulation was undertaken to enhance the visualization for archaeological feature detection.

2.8. DTM tile formed the basis within the desk-based assessment and is illustrated on Fig. 6 to 8.

### ***Assessment of heritage significance***

2.9. The significance of known (Fig. 9 to 11) and potential heritage assets within the Site, and any beyond the Site which may be affected by the proposed development, has been assessed and described, in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF (2019), the guidance issued by ClfA (2017), Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 (HE 2015a) and Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (Historic England 2019). Determination of significance has been undertaken according to the industry-standard guidance on assessing heritage value provided within Conservation Principles (English Heritage 2008). This approach considers heritage significance to derive from a combination of discrete heritage values, principal amongst which are: i) evidential (archaeological) value, ii) historic (illustrative and associative) value, iii) aesthetic value, iv) communal value, amongst others. Further detail of this approach, including the detailed definition of those aforementioned values, as set out, and advocated, by Historic England, is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

### ***Assessment of potential development effects (benefit and harm)***

2.10. The present report sets out, in detail, the ways in which identified susceptible heritage assets might be affected by the proposals (Appendix 2), as well as the anticipated extent of any such effects. Both physical effects, i.e. resulting from the direct truncation of archaeological remains, and non-physical effects, i.e. resulting from changes to the setting of heritage assets, have been assessed. With regard to non-physical effects or 'settings assessment', the five-step assessment methodology advocated by Historic England, and set out in the Second Edition of GPA3 (Historic England, 2017), has been adhered to (presented in greater detail in Appendix 1).

2.11. Identified effects upon heritage assets have been defined within broad 'level of effect' categories (Table 2.2 below). These are consistent with key national heritage policy and guidance terminology, particularly that of the NPPF (2019). This has

been done in order to improve the intelligibility of the assessment results for purposes of quick reference and ready comprehension. These broad determinations of level of effect should be viewed within the context of the qualifying discussions of significance and impact presented in this report.

2.12. It should be noted that the overall effect of development proposals upon the designated heritage asset are judged, bearing in mind both any specific harms or benefits (an approach consistent with the Court of Appeal judgement *Palmer v. Herefordshire Council & ANR* Neutral Citation Number [2016] EWCA Civ 1061).

2.13. In relation to non-designated heritage assets, the key applicable policy is paragraph 197 of the NPPF (2019), which states that:

*'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the **scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset** [our emphasis].'*

2.14. Thus with regard to non-designated heritage assets, this report seeks to identify the significance of the heritage asset(s) which may be affected, and the scale of any harm or loss to that significance.

Level of effect	Description	Applicable statute & policy
<b>Heritage benefit</b>	The proposals would better enhance or reveal the heritage significance of the heritage asset.	Enhancing or better revealing the significance of a heritage asset is a desirable development outcome in respect of heritage. It is consistent with key policy and guidance, including the NPPF (2019) paragraphs 185 and 200.
<b>No harm</b>	The proposals would preserve the significance of the heritage asset.	Sustaining the significance of a heritage asset is consistent with paragraph 185 of the NPPF, and should be at the core of any material local planning policies in respect of heritage.
<b>Less than substantial harm (lower end)</b>	The proposals would be anticipated to result in a restricted level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset, such that the asset's contributing heritage values would be largely preserved.	In determining an application, this level of harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, as per paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019).
<b>Less than substantial harm</b>	The proposals would lead to a notable level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset. A	Proposals with the potential to physically affect a Scheduled Monument (including the ground beneath that monument) will be subject to the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act

Level of effect	Description	Applicable statute & policy
(upper end)	reduced, but appreciable, degree of its heritage significance would remain.	(1979); <i>these provisions do not apply to proposals involving changes to the setting of Scheduled Monuments.</i>  With regard to non-designated heritage assets, the scale of harm or loss should be weighed against the significance of the asset, in accordance with paragraph 197 of the NPPF.
Substantial harm	The proposals would very much reduce the heritage asset's significance or vitiate that significance altogether.	Paragraphs 193 - 196 of the NPPF (2018) would apply. Sections 7, 66(1) and 72(2) of the Planning Act (1990), and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), may also apply.  In relation to non-designated heritage assets, the scale of harm or loss should be weighed against the significance of the asset, in accordance with paragraph 197 of the NPPF.

**Table 2.2** Summary of level of effect categories (benefit and harm) referred to in this report in relation to heritage assets, and the applicable statute and policy.

2.15. The July 2019 revision of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) defines non-designated heritage assets as those identified as such in publicly accessible lists or documents provided by the plan-making body. Where these sources do not specifically define assets as *non-designated heritage assets*, they will be referred to as *heritage assets* for the purpose of this report. The assessment of *non-designated heritage assets* and *heritage assets* will be equivalent in this report, in line with industry standards and guidance on assessing significance and impact. They may not, however, carry equivalent weight in planning as set out within the provisions of the NPPF.

#### **Limitations of the assessment**

2.16. This assessment is principally a desk-based study, and has utilised secondary information derived from a variety of sources, only some of which have been directly examined for the purpose of this assessment. The assumption is made that this data, as well as that derived from secondary sources, is reasonably accurate. The records held by HER and HEA are not a record of all surviving heritage assets, but a record of the discovery of a wide range of archaeological and historical components of the historic environment. The information held within these repositories is not complete, and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown. A

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geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys 2018) and an archaeological evaluation (CA 2019) were carried out within the Site. The results of the latter revealed linear features of prehistoric to Roman date and funerary activity of possible later prehistoric to Roman date within the westerly part of the Site. No archaeology, barring a palaeochannel, was recorded within the easterly and south-easterly part of the Site (CA 2019) as illustrated on Figures 10 and 11. This does not preclude the discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown beyond the trial trench footprints.

- 2.17. A selection of archival material pertaining to the Site and study area was consulted in person at the Oxfordshire Archives on 24th January 2020. There may be other relevant material held by the National Archives, other local repositories, and in private collections; which it was not possible to consult or was not consulted.
- 2.18. A walkover survey of the Site and study area was carried out on 24th January 2020 in overcast, damp weather conditions, in order to examine current land use and topography, and to assess any potential effects on the setting and significance of heritage assets. Designated heritage assets (principally comprising two Scheduled Monuments Fig. 2, **A** and Fig. 2, **F**) within the study area were also assessed at this time. Access was afforded within the Site but was limited to public access routes within the study area. The Scheduled Monuments were assessed from the adjoining fields, surrounding roads, public rights of way and the Site.

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### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### *Overview of the heritage resource*

- 3.1. This section provides an overview of the historic and archaeological background of the Site and study area to provide a better understanding of the context and significance of the heritage resources that may be affected by the proposed development (Appendix 2). The Assessment includes a consideration of the results of recent archaeological works carried out by CA (CA 2016b; 2019) within the Site and land to the west of the Site (CA 2016b), known as Catalyst Bicester and Bicester Gateway respectively (Fig. 9).
- 3.2. Figure 2 illustrates the designated heritage assets within the study area (**A-E**). Non-designated heritage assets (**1-41**), of prehistoric, Roman and medieval to modern date are shown on Figs. 3, 4 and 5 respectively. All of these heritage assets are listed in Appendix 3. Those assets that are not considered to be of specific relevance to the historic development of the Site are listed in Appendix 4.

#### *Landscape context*

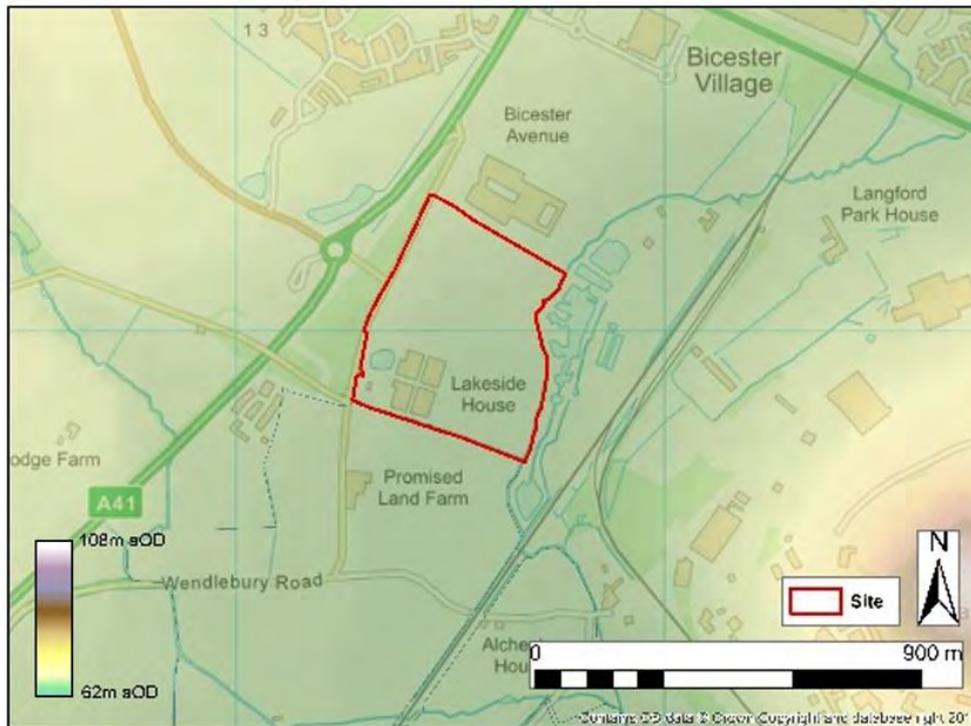
- 3.3. The Site measures approximately 19.4ha and is located to the east of the A41 'Oxford Road' and Wendlebury Road, and approximately 1.5km to the south of Bicester. The Site lies on relatively level ground, at approximately 65m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) (Fig.10).
- 3.4. The Site (photo 2) largely comprises open land consisting of four fields under pasture. A poultry farm, the Faccenda chicken farm and adjoining property Lakeside Bungalow and a pond occupy the south-western corner of the Site. The northern boundary of the Site abuts a trackway leading to a Thames Water waste water and sewage works. The southern Site boundary is demarcated by a low-lying fence of wooden posts and wire and a hedgerow (Photo 4), adjoining the Scheduled monument of Alchester Roman Site. The western Site boundary adjoins Wendlebury Road orientated north-east to south-west, curving north to south adjacent to the south-western boundary of the Site before changing orientation to east to west. The eastern Site boundary is demarcated by a tributary of the River Ray orientated northwest to south-east. Commercial developments comprising Bicester Avenue Garden Centre and King Acre Landscaping Centre Bicester lie to the north and open land to the south.



**Photo 2 View within the Site towards the south-south-west**

### ***Geology of the Site***

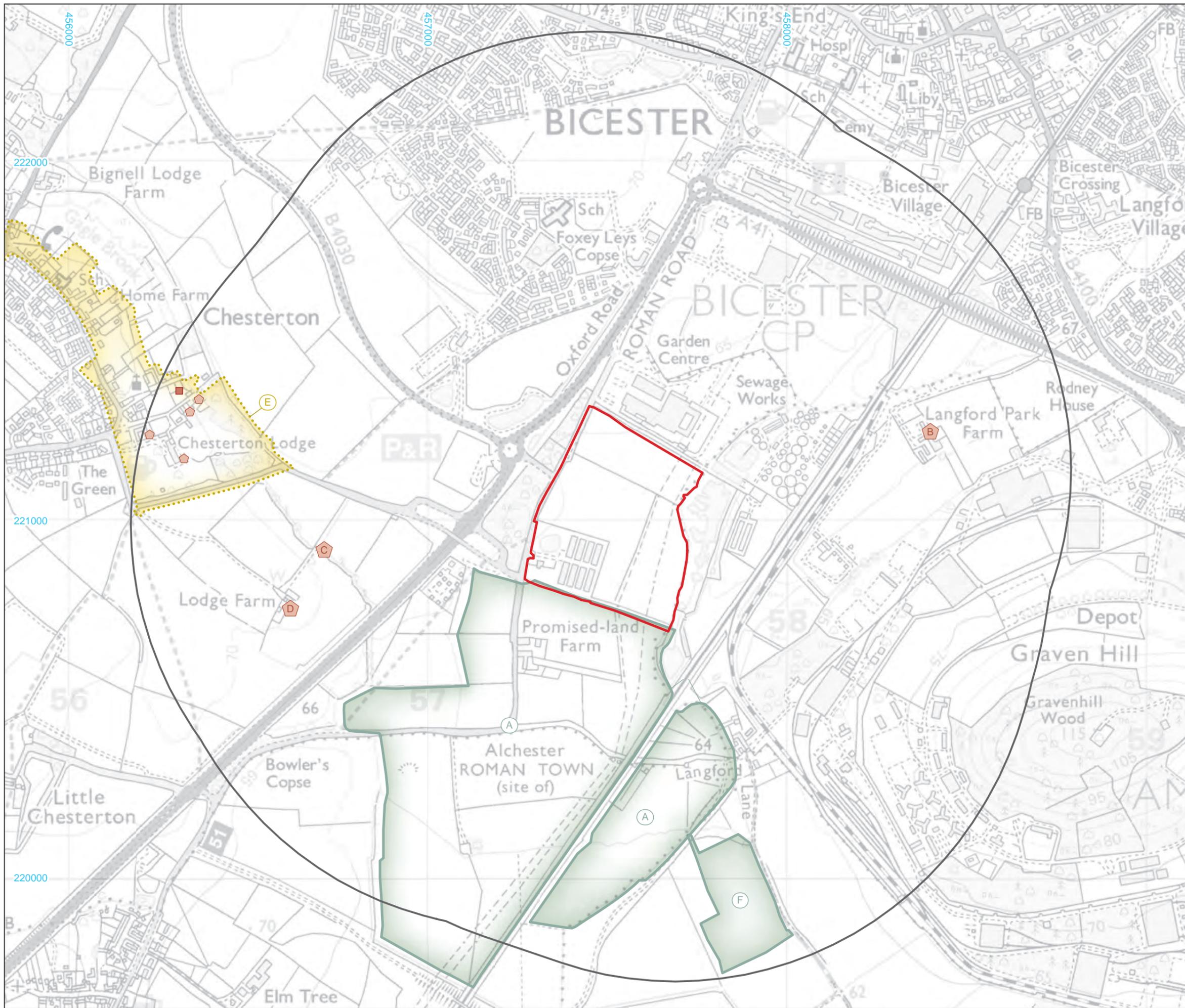
- 3.5. The underlying solid geology within the Site comprises Kellaways Sand Member consisting of Sandstone and Siltstone, interbedded in the southern part of the Site and Kellaways Clay Member comprising Mudstone in the northern part of the Site, both formed in the Jurassic Period (approximately 165 to 161 million years ago) (BGS 2020).
- 3.6. The superficial geology within the Site largely comprises Alluvium consisting of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel, across the majority of the Site. The superficial geology within the north-western corner comprises River Terrace Deposits, 1 – Sand and Gravel (BGS 2020). The soilscape within the Site comprises loamy soils with naturally high groundwater and low fertility in the eastern portion of the Site, whilst the western part of the Site comprises slowly permeable seasonally wet and slightly with rich loamy and clayey soils with moderate fertility (Cranfield University 2020). The Site lies within a low-lying area of the landscape at approximately 65m aOD (Fig.12). The natural geology was observed at approximately 1m below present ground level (bpgl) during the trial trench evaluation (CA 2019).



**Figure 12 Topography of the Site and surrounding landscape**

### *Development proposals*

- 3.7. The proposed development comprises commercial development. At present the development layout has not been fixed and there are two possible Masterplans (Scenario 02 and 04) (Appendix 2). Scenario 02 comprises the development of units within the north-western part of the Site along with associated infrastructure and landscaping and no development within the eastern section. Whereas Scenario 04 comprises the development of units within the western section along with associated infrastructure and landscaping and no development within the eastern section of the Site (Appendix 2). Scenario 02 and 04 are identical in respect of the north-western and eastern parts of the site including a Health and Racquets Club in the north-west corner of the Site, a further six units dispersed across the north-western part of the Site and open land to the east. Scenario 04 allows for development within the south-west corner of the Site in the location of the present Faccenda chicken farm and adjoining property Lakeside Bungalow, whereas this is open land in the Scenario 2 layout. Figures 10 and 11 show the proposed Masterplan layouts overlaid with the results of the previous archaeological investigations within the Site. This is intended to aid the following discussion and consideration of the remains recorded within the Site in relation to the development proposals.



- Site boundary
- Study area
- Scheduled Monument
- Chesterton Conservation Area
- Grade II\* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building

0 1:10,000 500m

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PROJECT TITLE  
**Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

FIGURE TITLE  
**Recorded designated heritage assets**

DRAWN BY	RP+GB	PROJECT NO.	MK0187	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	04/02/2020	2
APPROVED BY	SM	SCALE@A3	1:10,000	

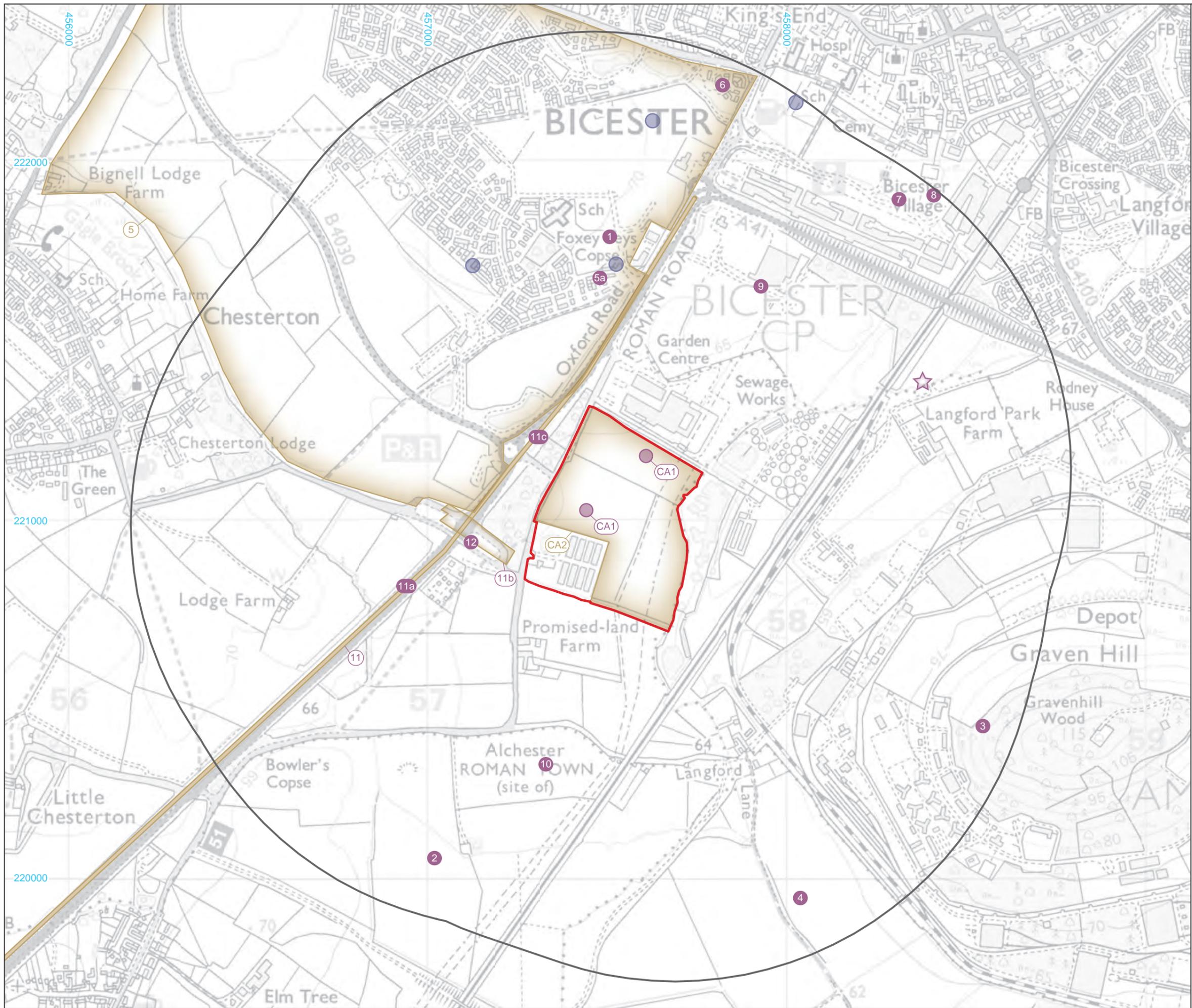
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### *Designated heritage assets (see Figure 2)*

- 3.8. There are no designated heritage assets within the Site itself, although the northern boundary of the Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Site (NHLE: 1006363), lies to the south of the Site (Fig.2, **A**). Alchester Roman Site extends further to the south encompassing approximately 15 fields to the south of the Site spanning Wendlebury Road and Langford Lane and divided by a railway line orientated north-east to south-west (as shown on Fig.9).
- 3.9. The Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman parade ground, access road and marching camp (NHLE: 1443650) is located approximately 570m to the south of the Site (Fig.2, **F**). The Scheduled Monument lies in open land to the south-east of Langford Lane (as shown on Fig.9).
- 3.10. Chesterton Conservation Area, including one Grade II\* and four Grade II Listed Buildings, is located approximately 730m to the west of the Site extending beyond the study area (Fig.2, **E**). Within the wider area, beyond the study area, the Bicester Conservation Area is located approximately 1.2km to the north-east of the Site and the historic core of Wendlebury Village (not designated as a Conservation Area but associated with a significant number of Listed Buildings) is located approximately 2km to the south-west of the Site.
- 3.11. A further two Grade II Listed Buildings are located within the study area (Fig.2). These include: Langford Park Farmhouse, which is located approximately 600m to the north-east of the Site (**B**) and a bridge approximately 550m to the south-west of the Site (**C**).
- 3.12. There are no World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, or Registered Battlefields within the Site or study area.
- 3.13. The two Scheduled Monuments, comprising Alchester Roman Site (1006365, Fig. 2, **A**) and Alchester Roman parade ground, access road and marching camp (1443650, Fig. 2, **F**) are considered further in the settings assessment presented in Section 5 of this report. They are only discussed in this section to assist discussions of the potential for associated remains to occur within the Site. Figure 9 illustrates the location of the two Scheduled Monuments along with a detailed reproduction of the cropmarks recorded by the RCHME (Stoertz 1998). It also shows the results of the geophysical survey within the Site (Archaeological Surveys 2018) and the trial trench locations (CA 2019). The projected line of the former Roman town wall and

---

the area defined as rural hinterland has also been shown on Figure 9. This is intended to aid the following discussion and consideration of the remains recorded within the Site in relation to the two Scheduled Monuments, in particular Alchester Roman Site.



- Site boundary
- Study area
- Cropmarks
- ① Prehistoric
- ★ Find spot
- Previous investigations

0 1:10,000 500m

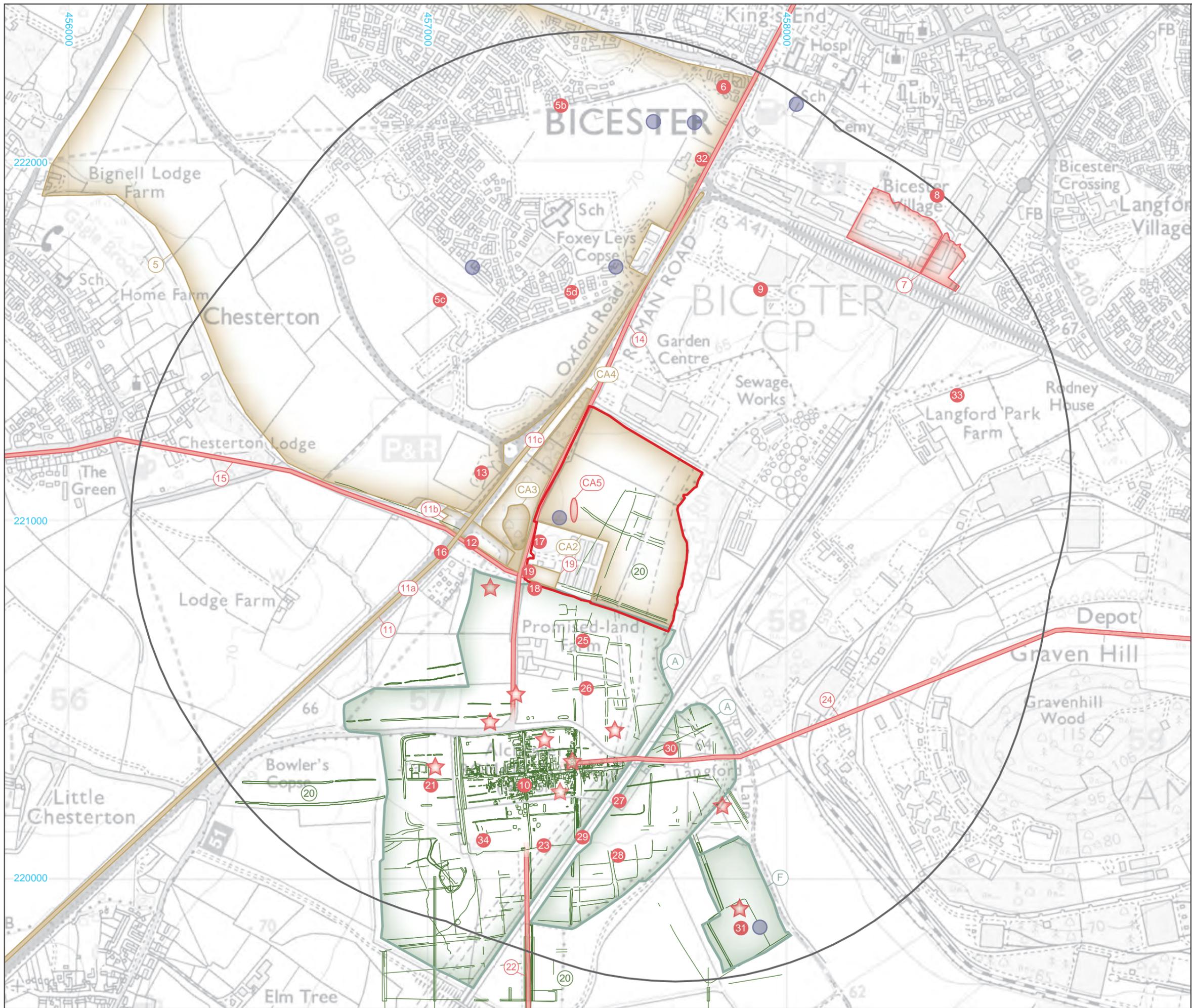
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PROJECT TITLE  
**Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

FIGURE TITLE  
**Prehistoric heritage assets**

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	04/02/2020	<b>3</b>
APPROVED BY	SM	SCALE@A3	1:10,000	



- Site boundary
- Study area
- Cropmarks
- Scheduled Monument
- 1 Roman
- Roman roads
- ★ Find spot
- Previous investigations
- 20 Cropmarks (RCHME 1996)



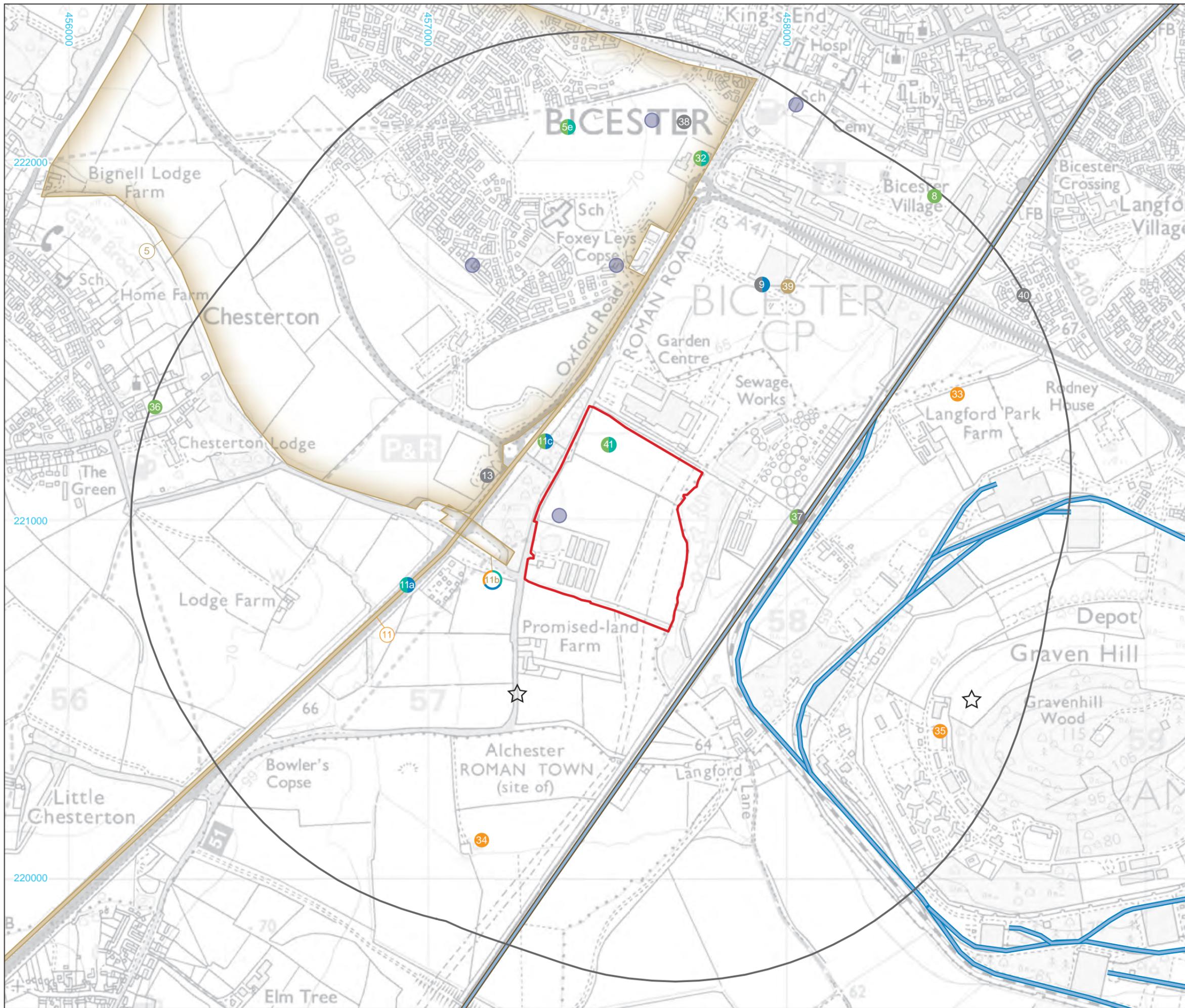
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PROJECT TITLE  
**Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

FIGURE TITLE  
**Roman heritage assets**

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	04/02/2020	<b>4</b>
APPROVED BY	SM	SCALE@A3	1:10,000	



- Site boundary
- Study area
- Cropmarks
- Buckinghamshire Railway Line
- Bicester Military Railway
- Early-medieval
- Medieval
- Post-medieval
- Modern
- Undated
- ☆ Find spot
- Previous investigations



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PROJECT TITLE  
Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE  
Early medieval to modern heritage assets

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	04/02/2020	5
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 Site boundary



Multi-direction hillshade: Environment Agency 1m Digital Terrain Model, 2003  
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PROJECT TITLE  
**Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

FIGURE TITLE  
**Site overlaying 8-direction hillshade model**

DRAWN BY	JSJ+RW	PROJECT NO.	MK0187	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	11/02/2020	<b>6</b>
APPROVED BY	SM	SCALE@A3	1:5,000	



 Site boundary

Local relief  
  
 High  
 Low

0 1:5000 250m

Local relief model: Environment Agency 1m Digital Terrain Model, 2003  
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PROJECT TITLE  
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FIGURE TITLE  
 Site overlaying local relief model

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	11/02/2020	7
APPROVED BY	SM	SCALE@A3	1:5,000	

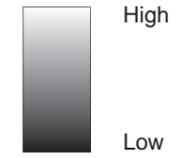


- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench (CA 2019)
- Archaeological feature (CA 2019)

Geophysical survey results  
(Archaeological Surveys Ltd. 2018)

- Positive linear anomaly (potential archaeology)
- Positive linear anomaly (possible archaeology)
- Positive linear anomaly (former field boundary)
- Negative linear anomaly (land drainage)

Local relief



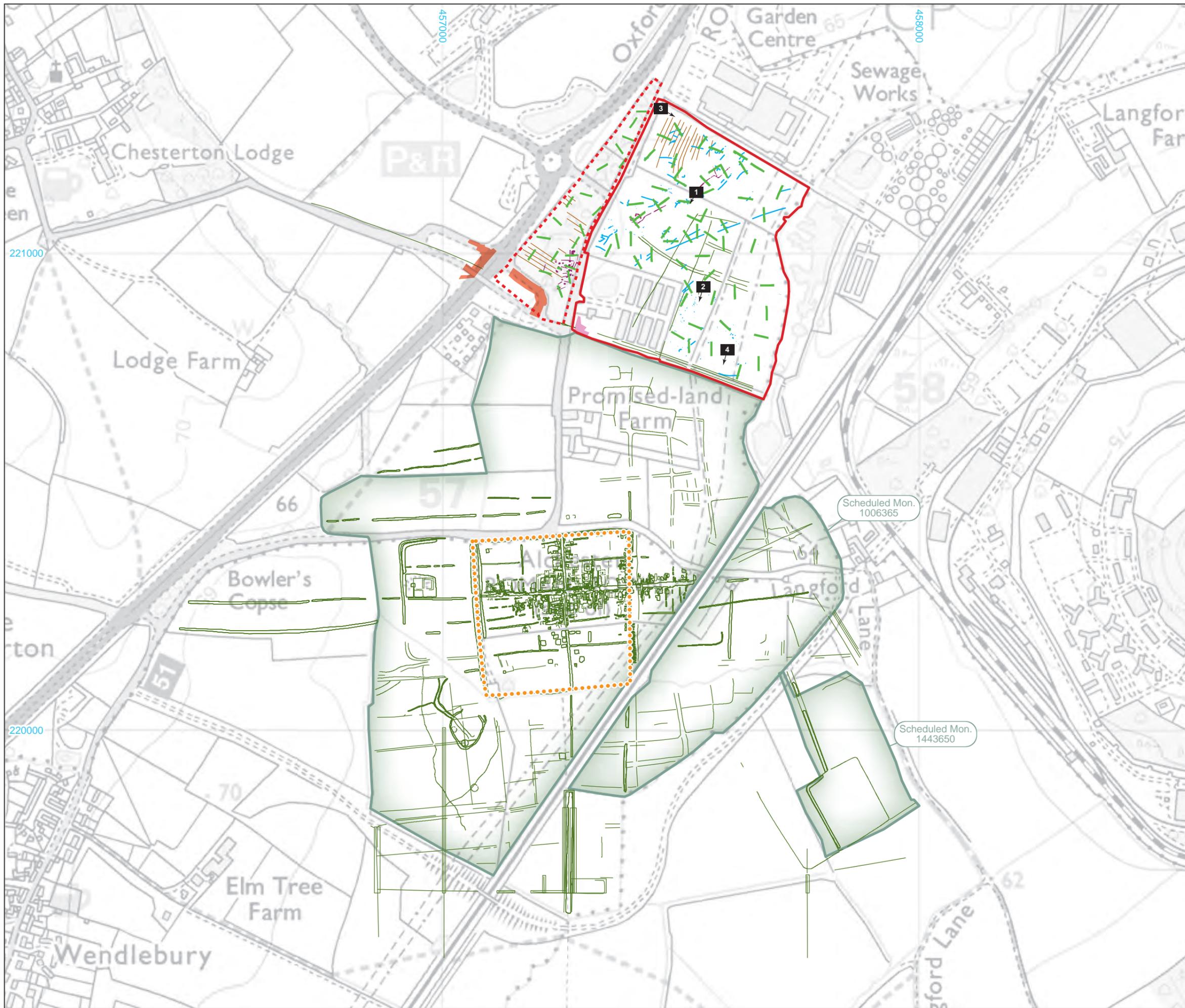
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PROJECT TITLE  
Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE  
**Site and previous investigations  
overlaying local relief model**

DRAWN BY	JSJ+RW	PROJECT NO.	MK0187	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	11/02/2020	8
APPROVED BY	SM	SCALE@A3	1:5,000	



- Site boundary
- Bicester Gateway boundary
- Scheduled Monument
- Evaluation trench (CA 2016b and 2019)
- Booth et al. 2001
- Rahtz et al 1983
- Roman Town Wall
- Cropmarks (RCHME 1996)
- Photograph locations and directions

- Geophysical survey results (PCG 2016; AS 2018)
- Archaeology
  - Uncertain
  - Ridge and furrow



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PROJECT TITLE  
**Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

FIGURE TITLE  
**Plan to show Scheduled Monuments within study area and previous investigations within site**

DRAWN BY	RW	PROJECT NO.	MK0187	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	04/02/2020	9
APPROVED BY	SM	SCALE@A3	1:7,500	



- Site boundary
- Trench with no alluvium recorded
- Trench with alluvium recorded
- T20 Trench with archaeology recorded
- T20 Trench with no archaeology recorded
- Access zone
- Area subject to full application for Health & Racquets Club

Geophysical survey results  
(Archaeological Surveys Ltd. 2018)

- Positive linear anomaly (potential archaeology)
- Positive linear anomaly (possible archaeology)
- Positive linear anomaly (former field boundary)
- Negative linear anomaly (land drainage)
- Linear anomaly (agricultural)
- Linear anomaly (ridge and furrow)



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PROJECT TITLE  
Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE  
**Masterplan Scenario 02 showing previous investigations**

DRAWN BY	<b>RW</b>	PROJECT NO.	<b>MK0187</b>	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	<b>DJB</b>	DATE	<b>04/02/2020</b>	<b>10</b>
APPROVED BY	<b>SM</b>	SCALE@A3	<b>1:2,500</b>	



- Site boundary
- Trench with no alluvium recorded
- Trench with alluvium recorded
- T20 Trench with archaeology recorded
- T20 Trench with no archaeology recorded
- Access zone
- Area subject to full application for Health & Racquets Club

Geophysical survey results  
(Archaeological Surveys Ltd. 2018)

- Positive linear anomaly (potential archaeology)
- Positive linear anomaly (possible archaeology)
- Positive linear anomaly (former field boundary)
- Negative linear anomaly (land drainage)
- Linear anomaly (agricultural)
- Linear anomaly (ridge and furrow)



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PROJECT TITLE  
Catalyst Bicester, Bicester, Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE  
**Masterplan Scenario 04 showing previous investigations**

DRAWN BY CHECKED BY APPROVED BY	RW DJB SM	PROJECT NO. DATE SCALE@A3	MK0187 04/02/2020 1:2,500	FIGURE NO. <b>11</b>
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### *Prehistoric*

- 3.14. Ditches containing prehistoric pottery sheds of Iron Age (later prehistoric date) were recorded within the northern and western parts of the Site during an archaeological evaluation carried out by CA in March 2019 (Fig.3, **CA1**; CA 2019). The pottery comprised sherds of fine shell-tempered ware dated to the prehistoric and sherds of Grog-tempered ware dated to the Iron Age and early Roman period. The pottery sherds were revealed from features in Trenches 19, 21, 23, 24 and 33 (Fig.10-11).
- 3.15. Further evidence of prehistoric activity comprises a lithic implement, recovered during an evaluation at Priory Road, located approximately 990m north-east of the Site, a Mesolithic flint scatter comprising well-preserved worked flints and cores recovered approximately 500m to the north-east, and a Neolithic axe recovered approximately 620m to the north-east of the Site (Fig. 3, 8 and 9).
- 3.16. Two interrupted ring ditches interpreted as Bronze Age barrows are located approximately 540m to the north of the Site (Fig. 3, **1**). A further two ring ditches are located approximately 950m to the south-east of the Site (Fig. 3, **3**). The larger barrow to the north of the Site produced Early Bronze Age collared urn pottery sherds from the ditch fills.
- 3.17. Evidence for Late Neolithic to late Iron Age settlement was recorded as part of the excavations in the extramural settlement of Roman Alchester, at the crossroads between the A421 and Chesterton Lane, approximately 360m to the south-west of the Site (Fig. 3, **11a**). Evaluation trenching in March 1991, revealed features including Bronze Age burials and Iron Age ditches and Neolithic and Bronze Age flintwork and residual Beaker material was recorded. Further excavations recorded a sequence of middle to late Iron Age gullies, postholes and sub-rectangular enclosures (Fig. 3, **11b** and **11c**).
- 3.18. Prehistoric evidence recorded during fieldwork at LSWB Stage 1 Project by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology 2009), located approximately 350m to the north-west of the Site, included an Early Bronze Age barrow, and evidence for Late Iron Age settlement, including field systems, hearths pits, post holes, and ditches. (Fig. 3, **5a**). The concentration of late Iron Age features is interpreted as evidence for a dispersed, small-scale farmstead settlement, with associated intervening small-scale rectilinear field systems. The ditches, although associated with the settlement, were recorded as relatively insubstantial, even after the effects of truncation had

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been considered, thus suggesting a non-defensive settlement (Wessex Archaeology 2009).

- 3.19.** Further evidence for Iron Age activity comprises a Banjo enclosure and possible hut circles and trackways, located approximately 840m to the south-west of the Site (Fig. 3, **2**), along with a second possible enclosure and trackway approximately 840m to the south-east of the Site (Fig. 3, **4**). Recorded as part of the RCHME Level 3 aerial photographic interpretation project which was undertaken at Alchester in 1990 (Stoertz 1998), the Banjo enclosure was recorded with distinct entrance antennae, one of which formed part of a trackway that extended into the interior of the enclosure. Within the enclosure, ring ditches were suggested to represent individual hut circles, alongside more amorphous features. External to the enclosure, a possible hut circle and a number of linear features were also recorded, and initially interpreted as a potential stock enclosure. However, it should be noted that these, and the remainder of the amorphous maculae present in the field, could be of geological origin.
- 3.20.** Evidence for Late Iron Age and Roman settlement and enclosure has also been recorded through archaeological investigations approximately 960m and 900m to the north (Fig. 3, **6** and **7**), and c.140m to the west of the Site (Fig. 3, **12**). A number of recorded investigations at Alchester, immediately to the south of the Site (Fig. 3, **10**), have identified evidence for aspects of the military and civilian development of the town.
- 3.21.** Fieldwork within the Site has revealed limited evidence for prehistoric settlement activity taking place in the vicinity of the Trench 7 located at the northern edge of the Site. Additionally prehistoric dating evidence was recovered from features within Trenches 19, 21, 23, 24 and 33. Only a small assemblage of prehistoric pottery was recovered during the trial trenching comprising sherds of pottery. A single pottery sherd of probable Late Iron Age date was recovered from ditch 712 in Trench 7. The environmental evidence recovered from ditch 712 included low levels of charred remains but it was considered possible that these may be reflective of dumped settlement waste material. The environmental evidence also included moderate quantities of aquatic snail shells including moving water species, typical of areas subject to seasonal flooding and desiccation. Accordingly, it is considered likely that any settlement activity was likely to be of a temporary and small scale rural nature, between any flooding. Overall, there is limited evidence for sustained

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settlement during the prehistoric period and the evidence for seasonal flooding suggests that the Site was not suitable for permanent or long-term occupation at this time.

### *Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)*

- 3.22. Alchester, a former Roman 'small town' (Fig. 2, **A**) (designated as a Scheduled Monument) was located at the junction of five former Roman roads, with a defended area of approximately 10.5ha (Fig. 2, **A** and Fig. 9). A former Roman parade ground, access road and marching camp (Fig. 2, **F** and Fig. 9) (designated as a Scheduled Monument, 1443650) lies to the east of the former town. The Site lies to the immediate north of Alchester Roman site (Scheduled Monument, 1006365), however it lies approximately 380m to the north of the former defended area. The Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Site comprises both the remains of the defended town and the hinterland of the town; both the intramural and extramural occupation. The Site lies to the north of the former Roman hinterland (Fig. 9). Within the hinterland of the defended town is the former parade ground (formerly a marching camp) with roads leading between the hinterland, defended town and parade ground (Fig. 4, **A**, **F** and Fig. 9). The former defended town of Roman Alchester was abandoned towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, towards the end of the Roman occupation in Britain.
- 3.23. The defences of the Roman Town are almost square in plan (Fig. 9), with each of its sides c.350 metres in length. Originally bounded by a wall-faced rampart and ditch, remains of the ditch are well preserved to the west, where they still form a field boundary (Fig. 9), while the earthwork rampart remains easily distinguishable on the east and west sides, visible in aerial imagery of the area (Figure xxx-). The northern rampart has been removed/ truncated as a result of the road construction of Wendelbury Road (Fig. 9), and the course of the Chesterton Brook, to the south, has replaced the former ditch. Within the centre of the intramural area, two banks cross each other at right angles diametrically, with one running north to south and occupying the line of the former Roman Road from Watling Street to Dorchester, while the other runs east to west and continues beyond the walled town towards the ford to the east of the Scheduled Monument. Additional subsidiary banks once existed within the former Roman town, and remain traceable in the south-western corner, but have been removed in the north-east as a result of subsequent ploughing. Circular mounds are recorded in the north-east and south-east of the

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intramural area to the south of Wendlebury Road; the north-east circular mound has been interpreted as a tower (Fig. 4, **21**). Archaeological investigations in this area, approximately 650m to the south-west of the Site, recorded details of an internal road, alongside evidence of a workshop, granary, the early fort, a tower, gate and water channel. Plans of buildings have also been recorded during fieldwork undertaken in the 19th century and 1920s within the former Roman rural hinterland of the former Roman town (Fig. 4, **25** and **28**). These possible building foundation remains are situated within the former rural hinterland of the Roman town to the south of the Site.

- 3.24.** The Alchester Roman Town aerial photographic interpretation project was undertaken in the 1990s (Stoertz 1998), with the aim of interpreting and transcribing, in digital form, all relevant archaeological information contained in aerial photographs of the Roman town and its immediate surroundings, and with the objective of recording the details of the town plan and setting to the former Roman town of Alchester within its former landscape context (Fig 4. **20**: Stoertz, 1998).
- 3.25.** The project recorded cropmark evidence of the former Roman walled town and its rural hinterland (Fig. 9). This included areas of ridge and furrow cultivation to the south, and traces of former buildings were mapped to the north of the former Roman town as part of the intramural and extramural occupation of Roman Alchester, within the Scheduled Monument. The project also recorded the possible Iron Age Banjo enclosure (Fig. 2, **2**), and its associated three hut circles and ditches, which represent an earlier phase of activity and occupation.
- 3.26.** A series of regular, rectilinear ditched enclosures to the north, east and south of Alchester Roman Town closely reflect the alignment of the former town defences and internal streets and are therefore likely to be associated with the extra-mural settlement and economic activity of the town (Fig. 4, **20**).
- 3.27.** A number of investigations (Fig. 4, **10** and **16**) (Appendix 3) have identified several phases of construction at Alchester. These have indicated that stone buildings replaced earlier timber ones in the 2nd century AD, and that occupation continued from the mid-1st until at least the later 4th century AD. Of these excavations, the most recent comprise:

- a geophysical survey at Langford Lane, carried out in 2007 and 2008 on the eastern side of Alchester approximately 380m south-east of the Site (Stratascan 2008; John Moore Heritage Services 2009). The survey recorded a rectangular enclosure, suggested to have been a Roman fort, and a set of probable field boundaries (Fig. 4, **30**);
- a watching brief at F-Station, Chesterton carried out in 2002, approximately 120m to the south-west of the Site, did not reveal any archaeological features or finds (John Moore Heritage Services 2002) (Appendix 4);
- three seasons of investigation at Alchester Roman town located approximately 760m to the south-west of the Site (Sauer 2000) comprising four trenches excavated over the south-west angle of the town defences, revealed evidence for the town wall, ramparts and its robbing in the Saxon period (Fig. 4, **34**);
- an air photograph interpretation RCHME: Alchester Roman Town Project comprising a Level 3 photogrammetric survey on the area of land around the Roman town. This recorded both the Iron Age banjo enclosure and an accurate plan of the town centre set within a highly-planned landscape context (Fig. 4, **20**) (Stoertz 1998); and
- excavations in the extramural settlement of Roman Alchester undertaken in 1991 in advance of road construction on the A421 (Oxford Road), immediately to the west, and approximately 320m south-west of the Site (Oxford Archaeology 2002). The investigations recorded extensive evidence of Roman, and earlier, activity (Fig. 4, **11, 11a-c**).

**3.28.** Immediately to the west of the Site, evidence for Roman activity was recorded (Fig.4, **CA3-4**; CA 2016b) and there is a considerable amount of evidence for Roman activity within the study area. Beyond the confines of Alchester Roman Site, evidence for Roman activity comprises settlement and agricultural activity, including enclosures, paddocks, boundary ditches, and numerous findspots, located approximately 800m, 690m, 920m, and 970m to the north-east of the Site, c.110m to the west, and c.70m, 110m, 290m, 510m, 800m, and 810m to the north-west of the Site (Fig. 4, **5b-5d, 6-9, 13, 32-34**).

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- 3.29. Excavations undertaken in 1991 by Oxford Archaeology (2002), in advance of road construction on the A421 (Oxford Road) and completed in 1994 revealed evidence for Roman settlement (Fig. 4, **11**, **11a-11c**: Oxford Archaeology 2002). Located to the west of the Site, evidence for activity of the 1st to 2nd century date was characterised by ditches on alignments relating to the former Roman Akeman Street, while a complex system of ditched plots developed later, on each side of the lane running parallel to, and north of, Akeman Street. South of the lane, the earliest structures dated to the mid-2nd century. North of the lane, plots contained Roman structures of various plan and construction, and the character of this settlement appeared to be of predominantly agricultural. Settlement and agricultural activity appeared to have continued into the post-Roman period. A late Roman cemetery was recorded, alongside a large pottery assemblage, with numerous other finds.
- 3.30. Excavations located to the west of the Site (Fig. 4, **11b**) revealed notable differences between the degree of preservation of deposits within the excavation area. Much of the excavation area was associated with deposits ranging between 0.3m and 0.6m below ground level. However areas also contained limited in-situ remains, a result of intensive arable agricultural practices. Later prehistoric to Roman ditches suggestive of land management and cultivation was recorded to the north of the Site, within the limits of the study area (Fig. 4, **6-8**).
- 3.31. Early Roman evidence comprised a large ditch cutting the former Iron Age settlement, which was aligned west-north-west/east-south-east, and which established a basis for the layout of subsequent field boundaries that was maintained through this period. Other Roman features recorded during these investigations included structural evidence, with a mix of stone and timber buildings, enclosures, pits, hearths, post holes, trackways, cobbled surfaces, and wells, together with cremations and an inhumation cemetery (Fig. 4, **11b**) (Oxford Archaeology 2002).
- 3.32. Further evidence of late Iron Age and early Roman activity comprised gullies, enclosures and postholes, with finds including pottery, charcoal and a limited amount of animal bone (Fig. 4, **11c**). The evidence did not suggest intensive domestic activity. The paucity of material recorded has been interpreted as resulting from either the limited area exposed by the excavation, or from the peripheral location of the excavation area on the margins of Roman settlement at Alchester (Oxford Archaeology 2002).

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- 3.33. The Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman parade ground, access road and marching camp (Fig. 2, **F**) was initially identified as a cropmark as part of the RCHME project. Archaeological investigations within the Scheduled Monument identified a smaller, rectilinear enclosure which appeared to be linked by a straight section of road or trackway (Stoertz 1998). It is suggested that this may represent the military parade or training ground (Fig. 2, **F** and Fig. 4, **31**). A metalled, ditched roads leads north from this feature towards the town's east/west-aligned axial road, and the southern side of the suggested parade ground was found to coincide with the perimeter of a Roman ditch (Fig. 4, **20**) (Stoertz 1998).
- 3.34. Alchester is located approximately 500m to the south of the Cirencester to St Albans (Corinium to Verulanium) section of Akeman Street, and lies at the intersection with an unnamed former road running between Bicester to the north and Dorchester-on-Thames to the south (Fig. 4, 14-15). Another former road runs on an east to west axis across the former town and is clearly visible beyond the ramparts of the town defences (Fig. 4, **22** and **24**, Fig.9). A geophysical survey and watching brief undertaken in 1998-1999 approximately 850m to the south of the Site, recorded three ditches, of which two appear to form a continuation of the north to south former Roman road, running adjacent to the development Site (along Wendlebury Road) and the centre of the Scheduled Monument (Fig. 4, **22**).
- 3.35. Although various investigations have taken place on land surrounding Wendlebury Road, none have conclusively identified the position of the former Alchester to Towcester Roman road. However, it was visible as an agger (raised causeway) within the Scheduled Monument of Alchester identified from LiDAR data (Fig. 6). The former alignment of Akeman Street was examined at the junction of Chesterton Lane in 1937 (Fig. 4, **12**). The intersection between the former Alchester to Towcester road and Akeman Street is suggested to have been located just to the north of Alchester, possibly to the south-west of the proposed development Site (Lewis 2010).
- 3.36. As part of the investigations, a sewer pipe was re-routed between the Wendlebury Lane and Chesterton Lane junction, and the Faccenda chicken farm. Within the c.80m long trench excavated, deposits towards Faccenda chicken farm comprised a sequence consisting of modern road surface and associated hardcore alongside an underlying buff sandy clay, at a depth of c.0.6m to 0.75m below ground level. Beneath these layers, an approximate thickness of 1.3m of archaeological deposits

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was recorded (including the fills and cuts of features). The two northern sections of the trench had a total depth below ground level of 1.2m, including the modern road make up, and cut features were identified within the southern portion of the trench. An interpretation of this sequence suggested that, as the trench lay adjacent to the suggested edge of the former Alchester to Towcester Roman Road (Fig. 4, 14), these linear features may have related to the former road and associated roadside structures, rather than to the broad scheme of alignments identified to the west (Fig. 4, 11b). An edge-set of stones recorded during the investigation were suggested to represent a drain, and overlying stone layers within the sequence were interpreted as a phase of the former Alchester-Towcester road. A building, located adjacent to the former road, was also identified from a concentration of stone rubble in the sequence (Oxford Archaeology 2002).

- 3.37. The first phase of evaluation along Wendlebury Road in July 2010, 300m to the north, did not locate any Roman deposits. An evaluation at Wendlebury Road Phase 2 was undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) in November 2010 (Lewis 2010), prior to the construction of a new roundabout and slip road running off the A41 (Oxford Road) in the west, to Wendlebury Road in the east. The excavation comprised a single 3.5m long trench, aligned west, north-west/east, south-east. The western end of the trench was 1.13m in depth below ground level (Fig. 4, 17: Lewis, 2010).
- 3.38. The stratigraphy of the trench consisted of a modern road surface overlying made ground containing angular limestone fragments and concrete measuring 0.5m thick underlain by a compact, light-brown, sandy clay, containing occasional limestone inclusions. This overlaid a compact, brown sandy clay, with occasional charcoal and limestone inclusions producing Roman pottery, iron objects, glass and animal bone. This overlaid a compact, irregular surface of limestone of approximately 0.05m in thickness. The limestone surface extended beyond the edges of the excavated area to the north and south, and within the joints between the stones both Roman pottery and iron objects were recorded. Natural geology was not observed within the trench (Lewis 2010).
- 3.39. The evaluation produced pottery of 3rd to 4th century in date, a small quantity of animal bone, four iron objects, four pieces of ceramic building material and one single sherd of glass, recovered from the layer which had accumulated overlying the cobbled limestone surface. This surface was located along the suggested route

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of the former Roman road, and the remains recorded in this investigation are considered likely to represent the former road and finds appeared to represent domestic refuse (Lewis 2010).

- 3.40. During the construction of the railway line in 1848, 16 skeletons were recorded approximately 660m to the south of the Site (Fig. 4, 29). The remains of 28 inhumation burials, along with pottery sherds and demolition material, were recorded approximately 560m to the south (Fig. 4, 27). A single inhumation, Samian pottery and a cremation burial were uncovered during groundworks approximately 260m to the south of the Site within the Scheduled Monument (Fig. 4, 26).
- 3.41. Findspots recorded within and surrounding the former Roman town (Fig. 2, A) and parade ground, access road and marching camp (Fig. 2, F), comprise pottery, ironwork, copper alloy items and bone; a steelyard weight of lead with traces of a bronze case; a second lead weight; coins; and a piece of scale armour (lorica squamata) consisting of four linked bronze plates (Fig. 4 and detailed in Appendix 3). Approximately 530m to the south-east of the Site, a Roman coin hoard was discovered in 2000, consisting of 63 silver and 26 copper alloy coins of 1st to 2nd-century date, which had been deposited in the base of a greyware bowl or flagon. The date of deposition is estimated to be AD 138.
- 3.42. Despite substantial evidence for widespread Roman occupation to the south of the Site, there is little evidence of Roman date within the Site. The Site contains evidence for possible Roman period activity including the remains of a concentrated area of funerary activity (4 cremation burials) within Trench 22 (CA 2019) within the western part of the Site (Fig.4, CA5), to the north of the Faccenda chicken farm (Fig.4, CA2; CA 2019). It is unknown whether these possible cremations date to the Roman period or earlier as they are yet to be excavated (CA 2019). The western part of the Site, immediately to the east of Wendlebury Road, comprised a concentration of later prehistoric to Roman ditches (CA 2016b). However, there appears to be no archaeology identified (with the exception of a palaeochannel) within the south-eastern and eastern part of the Site (Fig.10 and 11); the concentration of Roman period archaeology is situated within the western part of the Site.
- 3.43. The excavation at the Faccenda chicken farm within the Site (Foreman and Rahtz 1983) recorded dating evidence of the Roman period; features of rubbish pits and

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drainage ditches contained approximately 2000 sherds of pottery and a limited quantity of animal bone. The ditches aligned east to west, with a gentle fall suggesting a drainage function, the fill of the ditches was consistent with waterlain material. The horse, sheep, and cattle bone recorded in the ditch, is likely to have derived from a nearby settlement. Pottery recorded during the excavation dated to the 1st to 2nd centuries AD, and other finds included metalwork, glass and quern fragments.

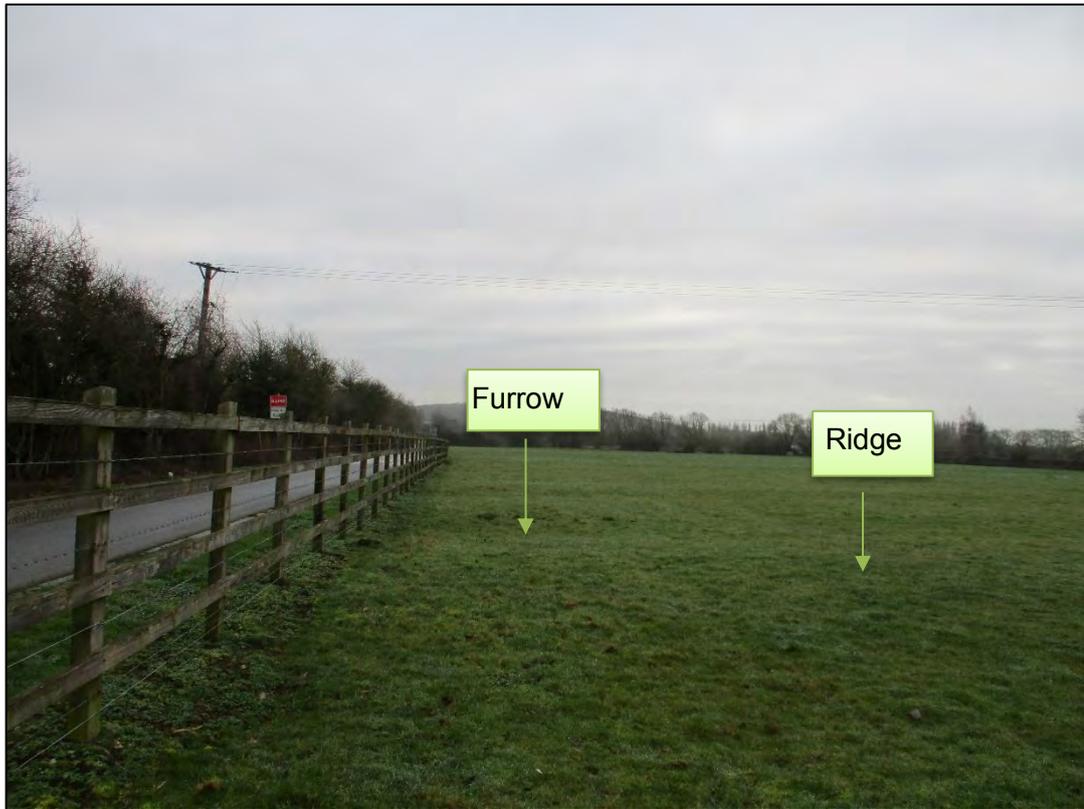
- 3.44. Analysis of the waterlogged samples suggested that the features were constructed on wet ground at Faccenda, between the 1st to 2nd centuries AD (Foreman and Rahtz 1983); the waterlogged plank and fragments of wood suggests that land management to mitigate flooding was being undertaken at the time. A rich assemblage of plant remains indicated that the settlement had an environment of wet grassland and disturbed ground, with some scrub and hedges present and evidence of crop-processing on the site was recorded. The character of the site suggested short-lived occupation, and the principal period of activity at Faccenda, in the mid-2nd century, falls between the earliest ditches of the Roman Town, and the formalisation of the town defences in the early 3rd century AD. The Faccenda site might therefore represent the maximum extent of activity to the north of the defended town (Fig. 9), when attempts were being made to drain and enclose the land.
- 3.45. An archaeological evaluation was carried out by CA in 2019 within the Site (CA 2019). Figure 9 shows the location of the Site and the Trench locations in relation to the Scheduled areas. Figures 10 and 11 show the results of the geophysical survey and evaluation overlaid with the proposed Masterplan Scenarios. The latter figures (10 and 11) also identify which trenches were blank and indicate that there were no apparent features continuing from the area of the evaluation further south.
- 3.46. The evaluation comprised 57 trenches dispersed across the Site, with exception of the Faccenda chicken farm. The archaeological remains in Trench 22 (aligned north to south) corresponded with the results of the geophysical survey; four cremation burials were recorded in situ of possible later prehistoric or Roman period (Fig. 4, CA5, Fig. 9; CA 2019). The four cremation burials were revealed in a single trench (Trench 22) (Figs. 10-11; CA 2019). The Site lies to the north of the former hinterland of the Roman walled town and to the east of a former Roman Road. Roman burials are often found along Roman roads on the approach to Roman

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settlements (HE 2018a, 8). The fieldwork within the Site (CA 2019) recorded a single ditch in Trench 33, within the central western portion of the Site to the north of the Faccenda chicken farm (CA 2019), containing three sherds of prehistoric to Roman pottery (CA 2019). The ditch was orientated north-west to south-east within the Site (Figs.10-11). Other ditches and discrete features were identified during the evaluation (CA 2019) though did not comprise any dateable evidence of definitive Roman date. All of the trenches (3-6, 8-12, 16, 26, 32, 36-37, 42-43, 45-57) excavated within the eastern portion of the Site did not contain any archaeological remains (Fig. 10 and 11; CA 2019). It is likely that the Site is situated on the fringes of the Roman settlement. Remains within the Site form part of a system of rural land management, drainage and refuse pits, which suggests the Site lies within the hinterland of the Roman town and was not part of the extramural settlement.

#### *Early medieval (AD 410 – AD 1066) and medieval (1066 – 1539)*

- 3.47. Anglo-Saxon and residual Beaker material were recorded to the west of the Site (Fig. 5, **11b-c**) during archaeological investigations (Oxford Archaeology 2002). Further medieval evidence comprises traces of ridge and furrow cultivation, which survived in earthworks, and post-medieval evidence included ceramic field drains, which followed the alignment of former ridge and furrow earthworks (Oxford Archaeology 2002).
- 3.48. The remnants of ridge and furrow earthworks have been identified by the geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys 2018) and during the Site walkover within the north-western corner of the Site (Fig.5, **41**). These earthworks have been transcribed from the National Mapping Programme data and are illustrated on figure 9. The earthworks are visible as shallow remnants of ridge and furrows and are of limited heritage significance (Fig.10 to 11, photo 3).
- 3.49. Evidence of early medieval activity within the study area of the Site comprises archaeological deposits located approximately 690m to the north-east of the Site, a reputed Anglo-Saxon battle site located approximately 800m to the south-east, and a findspot of an Anglo-Saxon spearhead found in near Gravenhill Wood, located approximately 860m to the south-east of the Site (Fig. 5, **33** and **35**). Recorded on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map, the reputed Anglo-Saxon battle site is recorded as the site of battle between the Danes and Saxons AD 871 (Fig. 5, **33** and **35**).



**Photo 3 View from within the north-west part of the Site looking east showing ridge and furrow earthworks, which are barley discernible**

- 3.50. The medieval parish of Bicester, held by Robert D'Oilly during the Norman period, covered a large area, and encompassed Stratton Audley and the hamlets of King's End, Bignell and Wretchwick. The Bicester parish was first reduced in size in 1454, when Stratton Audley became a separate parish, and King's End, although administered as a separate township, was divided from Bicester Market End only by the Bure Brook. The name King's End is thought to have originated around 1316 and is suggested to have been named in the 11th century, when Kirtlington, of which it was a member, was a royal manor. Although Bicester is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, the earliest account of King's End comes from the record for the Prioress of Markyate, who held a small manor, with eleven villeins holding six virgates between them (Victoria County History 1959; Craig 2009).
- 3.51. Originally part of Bignell, and thus of Kirtlington, it is not known from whom, or when, the Bedfordshire nunnery of Markyate Priory obtained their lands in Bignell. However, it has been suggested that the land was acquired soon after its foundations in c.1145. Bicester House, formerly known as Burcester Hall, is located on the site of the former manor-house of the nuns of Markyate. The nuns are

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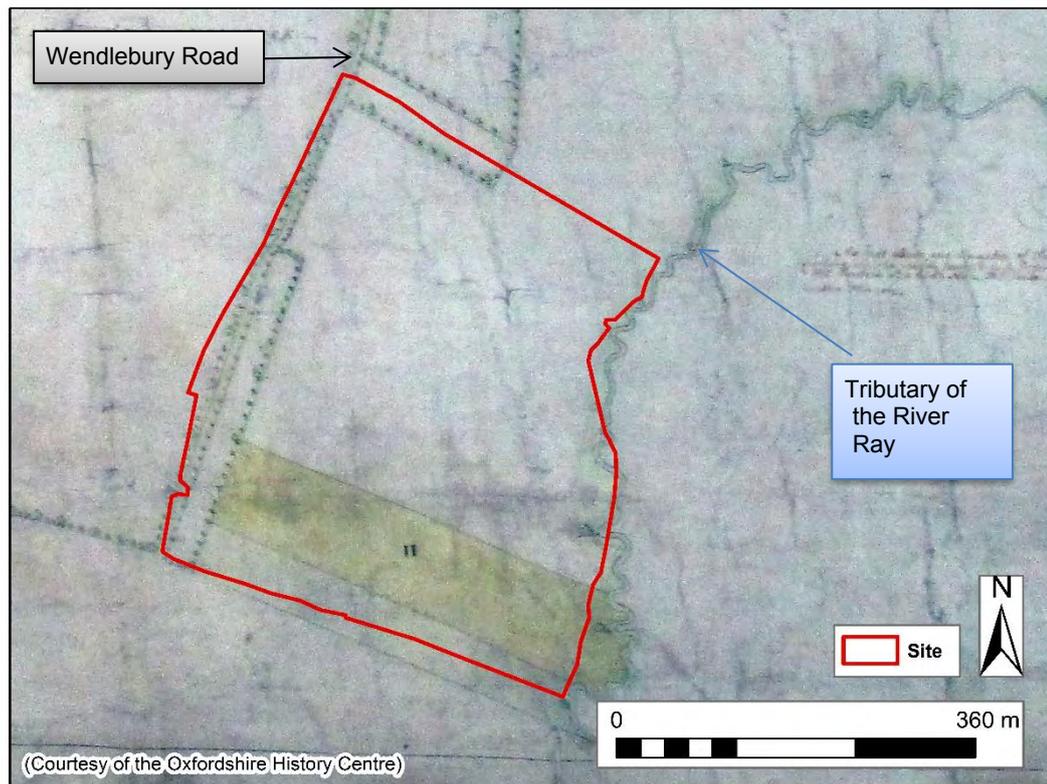
suggested to have leased their estate in 1530, which in 1584 was purchased with the house by John Coker.

- 3.52. In 1291 Markyate Priory held an estate valued at £2 16s 10d a year, and although Bignell near Chesterton has been identified as King's End, the name Bignell Field and King's End Field are suggested to have used alternatively during the Middle Ages for the common field of the two townships (Victoria County History 1959).
- 3.53. Further evidence of medieval activity within the study area of the Site includes evidence of agricultural activity and settlement features such as ditches, pits and postholes, ridge and furrow earthworks, trackways and quarries and miscellaneous findspots including tokens, pottery and coins, and recorded located immediately to the west of the Site, c.800m to the north, c.970m to the north-east, c.310m and 900m to the east, c.760m to the south-west and 1km to the west, and c.50m, 70m and 770 to the north-west (Fig. 5, **5**, **5e**, **8**, **11**, **11b-11c**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **37**).
- 3.54. Fieldwork within the Site has revealed limited evidence for medieval activity taking place in the vicinity of Trench 37 (Fig. 10) within the western portion of the Site. A single sherd of medieval pottery and two tile fragments were recorded as residual finds. The remains ridge and furrow of probable medieval date were also recorded during the geophysical survey (Archaeological Surveys 2018) within the north-western portion of the Site. The recorded evidence within the Site identifies that the Site was in use as agricultural land during the medieval period. The Site has remained in either arable or pastoral use from the medieval period. It is possible that archaeological remains within the Site have therefore been truncated as a result of historic methods of ploughing.

***Post-medieval (AD 1539 – 1800) and modern (AD 1801 – present)***

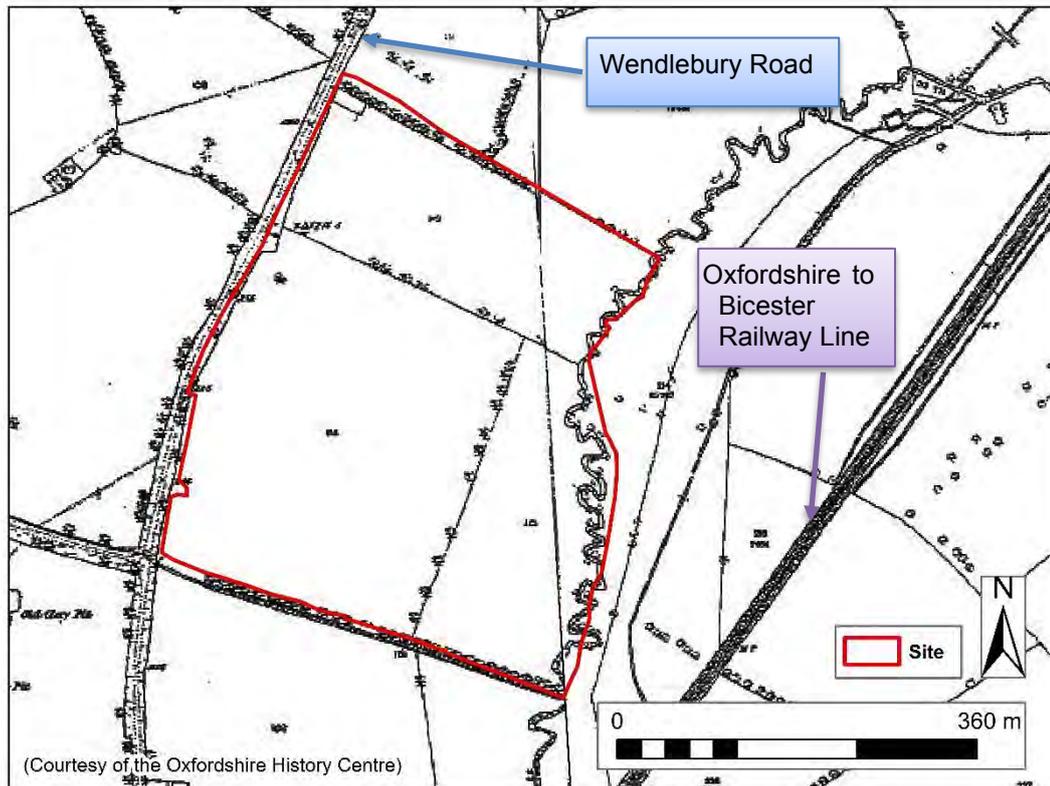
- 3.55. Post-medieval evidence within the study area largely comprises evidence for agricultural activity and quarrying immediately to the west of the Site, and c.770m to the north-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **5e** and **11b**).
- 3.56. Further evidence for post-medieval activity comprises finds of pottery and demolition material associated with farm buildings, boundary ditches, and demolition material recorded approximately c.800m to the north, and 530m to the north-east, of the Site (Fig. 5, **32** and **39**).

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- 3.57. Modern activity within the study area comprises land drains and service trenches, located immediately to the west of the Site, c.500m and 530m to the north-east 530m to the north-east, and c.360m south-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **9, 11a-11c, 39**).
- 3.58. The Buckinghamshire Railway, located approximately 140m east of the Site, was established through the merging of two companies proposing lines from Bletchley to Banbury, and Aylesbury to Oxford (Fig. 5). The Bletchley to Banbury section opened in 1850, and the Oxford to Verney Junction on the Bletchley to Banbury line opened a year later. The Banbury line remained a branch-line throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, while the Oxford Line developed into a major cross-county link, until its closure to passengers in 1968. The Banbury line closed to passengers in 1961, although a truncated spur to Buckingham remained open for a further three years. The use of Banbury line for goods traffic ceased in 1963, while the Oxford section remains fully operational.
- 3.59. Britain's largest military railway system, the Bicester Military Railway, is located approximately 200m to the east of the Site (Fig. 5), and functions as the primary mode of transport at the Central Ordnance Depot, Bicester. Surveyed prior to construction in August 1942, six passenger platforms were built around the Graven Hill depot, although all except the Graven Hill platform have since been demolished.
- 3.60. Graven Hill Depot is located approximately 900m to the east of the Site (Fig. 5). The site of an ordnance depot during the Second World War, the depot consists of a complex of sites clustered around Graven Hill and Arncott Hill, to the south-east of Bicester. Completed in 1943, the depot covered an area of approximately 12square metres, with nearly 50m length of railway track. The depot was used as the main supply base for British Army operations during the Second World War, and also became an important supply base for United States forces. The site has continued to function as a supply depot, although it has undergone a number of more recent changes, with some areas falling out of operational use. A number of the former storage hangars and original facilities survive.
- 3.61. During the post-medieval period, the Site is likely to have comprised open land, most likely used as farmland. An historic map regression exercise has allowed for consideration of historical developments within the Site, from the early modern period to the present day.



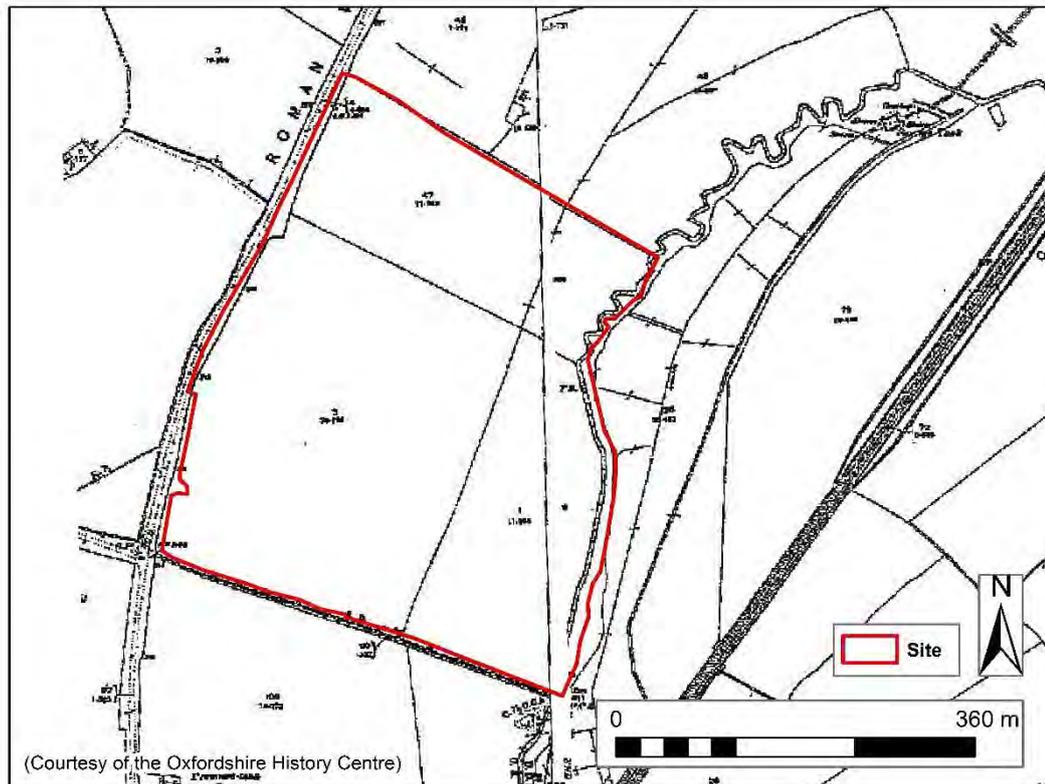
**Figure 13 Enclosure Map for King's End, 1793 (extract)**

3.62. The earliest cartographic evidence consulted for this assessment was Thomas Jefferies' Map of Oxfordshire of 1767 (not reproduced), and the Davis Map of Oxfordshire 1773 (not reproduced). These maps (not illustrated) provide a pictorial image of Bicester at this time but offer no detailed depiction or location of the Site. The 1793 Enclosure Map for King's End, and the Bryant Map of Oxfordshire of 1824 (not reproduced), were also consulted. These maps indicate that, during the late 18th century, the Site and its surroundings formed part of King's End Enclosure and King's End Mead, and that the former Roman road from Alchester to Towcester ran through the western margins of the Site (Fig.13). However, these maps do not provide a particularly detailed depiction of the Site itself. However the Enclosure Map (Fig. 13) does illustrate the course of the tributary of the River Ray, which abuts the Site to the east and also demarcates the trajectory of Wendlebury Road with tree coverage along its course and a parcel of land open land within the southern portion of the Site. There are no Tithe or Estate maps covering the Site.



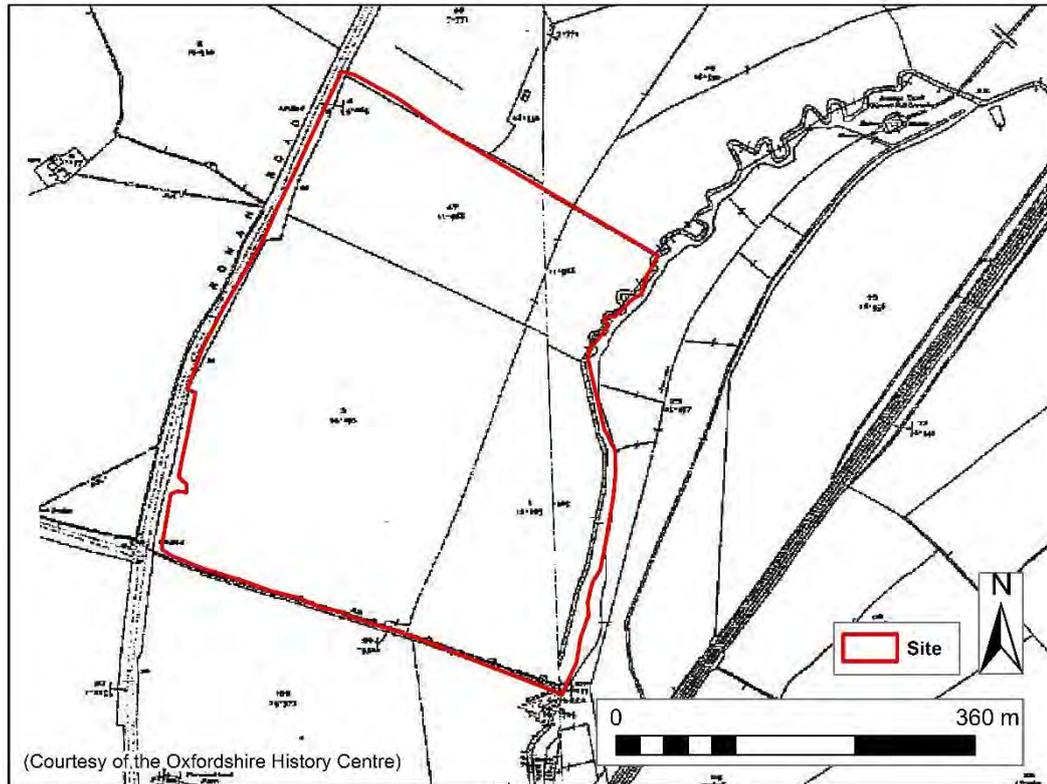
**Figure 14 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1885 (extract)**

- 3.63. By the late 19th century, the Site comprised three fields (Fig.14) bordered on the east by a tributary of the River Ray, and on the west by the line of the former Roman road (now Wendlebury Road) (Fig. 14). The immediate surroundings of the Site comprised open land. The Oxford and Bletchley Branch Railway, now known as Oxford to Bicester Railway Line, is recorded on Ordnance Survey mapping from the late 19th century onwards (Fig. 14).



**Figure 15 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1900 (extract)**

- 3.64. The Site was subject to only limited alterations during the 20th century (namely the construction of the Faccenda chicken farm in the 1990s), remaining open land comprising three fields as depicted on the 1900 and 1922 Ordnance Survey maps (Figs. 15 and 16). Throughout the 20th century the field boundaries within the Site appeared to have remained unchanged. Little discernible change has occurred within the Site. The boundaries of the Site follow the water course to the east and Wendlebury Road (along the alignment of the former Roman road) to the west.



**Figure 16 1922 Ordnance Survey Map of 1922 (extract)**

- 3.65. By the late 20th century, the chicken farm along the southern boundary of the Site, along with Bicester Village to the north and the sewage works to the north-east, had all been constructed (Fig. 17). Within the wider surrounding area, Bicester to the north, Chesterton to the east and Wendlebury to the south-west were subject to rapid expansion. However, land to the south, south-west and north-west of the Site remained as open land.
- 3.66. The Site currently forms three open fields with the Faccenda chicken farm complex within the south-west part of the Site (Fig.17), which was constructed during the 1980s. The fieldwork within the Site recorded limited evidence for post-medieval activity within the vicinity of Trench 35 (CA 2019), within the western boundary, (Fig. 10). Two parallel post-medieval or modern ditches were recorded. These features were not excavated due to localised flooding (CA 2019, 17). Six pottery sherds of post-medieval to modern date were recovered from the topsoil of Trench 37, within the western portion of the Site (CA 2019) (Fig. 10).



Figure 17 Aerial view of the Site (Google imagery 2020)

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## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE & POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON BURIED REMAINS

### *The significance of known and potential archaeological remains within the Site*

4.1. This assessment has identified that no designated archaeological remains are located within the Site; no *designated* archaeological remains will therefore be adversely physically affected by development within the Site. Known and potential non-designated archaeological remains identified within the Site comprise:

- Funerary activity comprising four cremations of possible late prehistoric or Roman date revealed in Trench 22 (CA 2019)
- Prehistoric and Roman ditches and pits containing pottery sherds revealed in Trench 1, 2, 19, 21, 23, 24, 33 and 34 (CA 2019)
- Medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow earthworks identified as cropmarks during the National Mapping Programme (NMP) and site walkover
- Presence of unknown archaeology of evidential value

4.2. The remains recorded during the fieldwork within the Site (Foremean and Rahtz 1983; Archaeological Surveys 2018; CA 2019) are of evidential value that can provide evidence about the past and human activity. It is possible that as yet unrecorded archaeology is present within the Site that retains evidential value.

### **Funerary activity comprising four cremations of possible late prehistoric or Roman date revealed in Trench 22 (CA 2019)**

4.3. Four cremation burials of possible later prehistoric or Roman date were revealed within the western part of the Site (Fig.10 and 11) during the archaeological evaluation carried out by CA in March 2019 (CA 2019). These were preserved in-situ at that time, pending further fieldwork and mitigation. The Solent-Thames Research Framework identify Roman cremation burials as a key way to sample for the use of plants in religion and ritual (Fulford 2014a, 182). The Research Framework also highlights that ‘there have been no extensive excavations of cemeteries, particular urban, in the sub-region (Fulford 2014b, 171). Accordingly the remains recorded within the Site have the potential to contribute to these research aims.

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#### **Prehistoric and Roman ditches and pits containing pottery sherds revealed in Trench 1, 2, 19, 21, 23, 24, 33 and 34 (CA 2019)**

- 4.4. Linear features interpreted as ditches and gullies associated with land management were recorded within the western and northern parts of the Site during the archaeological evaluation carried out by CA in March 2019 (CA 2019). These features produced a limited quantity of later prehistoric and Roman pottery sherds. The Solent-Thames Research Framework identifies the opportunities for further study of prehistoric to Roman field boundaries and systems (Lambrick 2014a and Lambrick 2014b, 150). Accordingly the remains recorded within the Site have the potential to contribute to these research aims.

#### **Medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow earthworks**

- 4.5. Evidence for ridge and furrow earthworks was identified by the geophysical survey within the Site (Archaeological Surveys 2018). The earthworks are partially visible within the north-western most portion of the Site (Photo 3). Any associated below ground remains would remain of little evidential or historical value, and thus would be considered heritage assets of low if any significance as the remains retain little evidential value.

#### ***Previous impacts***

- 4.6. It is likely that any agricultural land use will have impacted on any archaeological horizons, if present within the Site. However, it is likely any truncation as a result of cultivation will have only impacted on the upper archaeological horizon. It is likely that any archaeological remains present within the footprint of the chicken farm and associated building and pond would have been removed by this development.

#### ***Potential development effects (see Figures 10 and 11)***

- 4.7. The proposed development comprises two Masterplan Scenarios (Fig.10-11, Appendix 2). The development proposals comprise the construction of commercial units and health and racquets club. The development is confined to the westerly portion of the Site. Masterplan Scenario 02 comprises a no-build zone within the southerly and easterly portion of the Site. Masterplan Scenario 04 includes re-development of the Faccenda chicken farm within the southerly portion of the Site. A narrow no-build zone running along the southern boundary of Site is proposed as well as the easterly portion of the Site left as green space. Scenario 02 and 04 are identical in respect of the north-western and eastern parts of the site including a Health and Racquets Club in the north-west corner of the Site, a further six units

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dispersed across the north-western part of the Site and open land to the east. Scenario 04 allows for development within the south-west corner of the Site in the location of the present Faccenda chicken farm and adjoining property Lakeside Bungalow, whereas this is open land in the Scenario 2 layout. The archaeological remains within the footprint of the Faccenda chicken farm have been subject to archaeological investigation (Foreman and Rahtz 1983), as such there is little difference between Masterplan Scenario 02 and 04 in respect of the below ground archaeological resource of the Site. The development cannot be located within the eastern portion of the Site due to flood risk.

4.8. As such the archaeology present within the proposed development footprint would likely be truncated, if not removed by the construction process and development foundations.

4.9. Any truncation (physical development effects) upon those less significant archaeological remains identified within the Site would primarily result from groundworks associated with construction. Such groundworks might include:

- pre-construction impacts associated with demolition and ground investigation works;
- ground reduction;
- construction ground works, including excavation of building foundations, service trenches and stripping for roads/car parks;
- excavation of new site drainage channels (including soakaways); and
- landscaping and planting.

4.10. The final development strategy is yet to be determined. As such the development effects on this archaeological heritage asset can only be estimated at present. Both Masterplan Scenarios 02 and 04 propose the construction of units and an access road in this area. As such it is likely that the cremation burials of possible prehistoric or Roman date recorded in Trench 22 (CA 2019) may be truncated or removed during the construction process. The archaeological remains within the south-west portion of the Site were excavated prior to the construction of the Faccenda chicken farm (Foreman and Rahtz 1983). As such, the archaeological remains within this portion of the Site are likely already truncated or removed in some places as part of the construction of the Faccenda chicken farm complex.

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4.11. Prehistoric and Roman ditches and pits containing pottery sherds revealed in Trenches 1, 2, 19, 21, 23, 24, 33 and 34 (CA 2019) were recorded within the main area of development for both Masterplan Scenarios 02 and 04. As such these remains are likely to be truncated and or removed, dependant on the final construction strategy. The remnant historic ridge and furrow earthworks are recorded within the main area of development for both Masterplan Scenarios 02 and 04. As such these remains are likely to be truncated and or removed, dependant on the final construction strategy.

**Presence of unknown archaeology**

4.12. Any such remains are likely to be truncated by the development if they fall within the footprint of either Masterplan Scenario 02 or 04. Those archaeological remains within the footprint of the Faccenda chicken have already been subject to development impacts from the construction of the Faccenda chicken farm during the 1980s.

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## 5. THE SETTING OF HERITAGE ASSETS

5.1. This section considers potential effects of the proposed development on the significance of designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the Site. These effects are those that could potentially come from changes to the setting of heritage assets. All heritage assets included within the settings assessment are summarised in the gazetteer in Appendix 3 and shown on Figure 2.

5.2. A site visit was carried out on 24th January 2020 to inform the assessment presented here.

### *Summary of development proposals (Appendix 2)*

5.3. The proposed development of the Site comprises the construction of a clubhouse building of two-storeys including a sports hall, air dome, fitness studios, swimming pool, spa, café/ restaurant, car parking facilities and ancillary offices and staff facilities (Quod 2020). The development proposal also includes the construction of an access route from Wendlebury Road into the Site.

5.4. Masterplan Scenario 02 comprises development concentrated within the central western and north-western portion of the Site, leaving the eastern and southern portion as open green space.

5.5. Masterplan Scenario 04 comprises a similar development plan to Masterplan Scenario 02, with the inclusion of further commercial units within the south-western portion of the Site in the location of the extant chicken farm and adjoining buildings and pond.

### *Identification of heritage assets potentially affected*

5.6. Step 1 of the Second Edition of Historic England's 2017 'Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3' (GPA3) is to 'identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected' (see Appendix 1). GPA3 notes that Step 1 should identify the heritage assets which are likely to be affected as a result of any change to their experience, as a result of the development proposal (GPA3, page 9).

5.7. Step 1 entailed undertaking a map—based search of the National Heritage List for England, which identified eight Listed Buildings and two Scheduled Monuments within the study area (Fig.2, **A** and **F**). Five of the Listed Buildings lie in the Chesterton Conservation Area (Fig.2, **E**), approximately 720m to the west of the

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Site and a further two Listed Buildings lie to approximately 580m and 650m to the west of the Site (Fig.2, **C-D**). A single Listed Building lies approximately 620m to the north-east of the Site (Fig.2, **B**). The Scheduled Monuments lie to the south and south-east of the Site (Fig.2, **A, F**).

- 5.8. The list entry descriptions for these designated assets were reviewed; and Google Earth satellite imagery and current and historic mapping was studied to understand their situation relative to the Site.
- 5.9. Chesterton and the Listed Buildings within it are described in the Conservation Area Appraisal, 2008 (Cherwell DC). The Site does not possess any features or historical associations that contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The same can be said with regard to special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Buildings in Chesterton and the surrounding landscape. None of the Listed Buildings (or the Conservation Area) can be experienced from within the Site in so far as any changes of character to the Site would have an impact on their significance. These designated heritage assets are scoped out from any further assessment within this report.
- 5.10. The two Scheduled Monuments of Alchester Roman Site (*NHLE: 1006365*) and Alchester Roman parade ground, access road and marching camp (*NHLE: 1443650*) are located in close proximity to the Site. The significance of these designated heritage assets is considered further, here.

#### *Assessment of setting and potential effects of the development*

- 5.11. This section presents the results of Steps 2 to 3 of the settings assessment. Step 2 considers the contribution that setting makes to the significance and the two Scheduled Monuments. Step 3 considers how, if at all, and to what extent any anticipated changes to the setting of these assets, as a result of development within the Site, might affect their significance.
- 5.12. The extent of the walled town, extra-mural settlement, the military parade ground, marching camp and other components of the agricultural hinterland lie within extensive scheduled areas. Although there are two separate scheduled monuments (i.e. two separate 'designations' each with their own mapped extent), and three different disconnected, mapped areas (see Fig.2 and Fig. 9 – the Roman Site designated area being split into two by the railway line), for the purposes of assessing the heritage significance of the buried remains in this assessment they

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have been treated as a single, coherent, landscape-scale asset. The individual competent elements within this extensive asset are deconstructed to aid in the narrative.

- 5.13. This approach has been adopted to ensure a focus on understanding heritage significance and to avoid the pitfall of assessing the impacts on a 'designation'. This is especially relevant in this assessment (as indicated on Fig. 9) where there are areas within the scheduled monument that are devoid of archaeological remains and areas outside the scheduled areas where archaeological remains survive (also as illustrated by Fig. 9).

*Experience of the buried archaeological remains and their setting*

- 5.14. Conceptualising and articulating an experience of a heritage asset(s) that comprises just a fragment of its original form is a complex matter. This complexity is further compounded when these fragments are nearly completely hidden, buried remains. In the specific case of the remains at Alchester, where some low earthworks are barely discernible, the Town and its environs as experienced today bears no resemblance to the contemporaneous (Roman period) place and landscape. It is implicit throughout the discussion presented below that it is the understanding (experience) of the Roman period occupation of the site and immediately after, during its abandonment towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, that is the key matter of relevance to its heritage significance.
- 5.15. The changes that have occurred to the former Town and its surrounding landscape in the past (nearly) 2000 years have altered the place beyond all recognition. What once was built, urban and industrial in character now takes the form of a landscape that is rural and agricultural. What once was a busy, noisy, populated settlement is now devoid of all of the readily recognisable characteristics of human occupation. Even the ruination of the former grandeur is completely invisible. A low earthwork and alignment of a few hedgerows is the last intelligible remnant of the former defences, allowing only a well-informed observer to comprehend the extent, in plan, of the Town.



**Figure 18** aerial photograph of part of the scheduled area and where the outline of the town defences can be discerned (Google Imagery 2020)

- 5.16. The dichotomy continues to the north of the Town where it is likely that approximately 1900 years ago where once would have lain rural, open farmland and woodland, now lays the urbanised form of the considerably larger modern settlement of Bicester. This settlement is highly conspicuous when approaching the former Roman Town from the north with retail, industry and residential development flanking the roads. The principal relationships of urban and built-form versus rural and open has, through the passing of nearly two millennia, been flipped through 180 degrees. The only story that is convincingly articulated by the existing landscape character of the place is the account of the enormity of change that has taken place in the recent and not so recent past.
- 5.17. The landscape and area between the Roman Town and the southern extent of Bicester might initially be perceived as having undergone less change since the Roman period, retaining a basically rural and agricultural character. However, within this landscape and highly conspicuous when viewed from within and adjacent to the Site and within the scheduled areas are the common features of a 21st century English (or British) landscape. This includes the busy dual carriageway of the A41 and 10,000+ vehicles passing along it every day; the railway line and passing

trains; and the obvious presence of overhead power lines and their pylons and poles.



**Photo 4 Looking south within the south-eastern portion of the Site**

- 5.18. Regarding the specific character of the agricultural land holdings (the rural landscape) of the Site, the scheduled areas and the land further to the south-west and south east of the Roman Town, the subdivision of land parcels visible today has changed much in the past c. 1900 years. The current field boundaries are likely to belong to the organised enclosure of landscape in the past 300 years. This landscape underwent further transformation in the latter half of the 20th century as fields were amalgamated (made larger) and thus field boundaries were lost. The line of the A41 to the west of the Roman Town and the line of the railway jar against and cut through the grain and direction of the former Roman landscape. In summary, although the wider landscape is of a broadly rural character it possesses very few traits that could be associated with any period of history other than post-medieval or later. An exception to this is the outline of the Roman Town defences; its western and southern edges being preserved in the alignment of hedgerows and its northern extent broadly following the line of a lane.

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- 5.19. However, the predominate and overwhelming character of this wider landscape is one of a settlement (Bicester) that experienced rapid growth in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries and to its south post-medieval land divisions overlain by the presence of late 20th and early 21st century communication and 19th and 20th century travel infrastructure. This wider landscape is by no means an ‘artefact’ or a time capsule that belongs to one period of history and is certainly not a landscape that reflects the character of the Roman period.
- 5.20. The physical connection of the remains of the Town and the associated remains in its environs is critical to understanding the social geography of the place during the Roman period. Although, this relationship is not manifest in any surface expression the fact that the buried remains of both the Town and its environs survive adds to the potential archaeological interest / evidential value (discussed above). This understanding, although hidden from view, also contributes in some small degree to the experience of the remains.
- 5.21. The siting of the Roman Town at the crossing points of the road network is essential to the story of the Town and its relationship to other settlements within the region.
- 5.22. The complete absence of substantive built remains prevents the former Town and any associated features to be meaningfully experienced from any distance (or even close up). This is a critical point relevant to guidance given by Conservation Principles and GPA3.
- 5.23. The absence of substantive (and occupied) built-form at the site of the former Town and extra-mural settlement (within the scheduled area) clearly articulates the story of abandonment. The presence of Bicester to its north, or the presence of the Faccenda building within the Site does nothing to interfere with the experience of the story of the abandonment of the Town. The presence of the other modern features within the landscape also has no material effect on the understanding of abandonment. If anything, the clear presence of a much changed landscape helps articulate the passing of time that is needed to fully embrace and understand the abandonment of the place.
- 5.24. In summary, with only buried archaeological remains and some very scant earthworks surviving, the integrity of the Town and its environs has been nearly completely lost and to its immediate north its original (contemporary) setting has

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been transformed. Within its setting only the topographical position (its location on the former Roman Roads) and the broad character of the agricultural nature of the landscape immediately surrounding the former Town (including the Site) contribute to the understanding of the story of the place during the Roman period.

*The effect of development within the Site on the experience of heritage significance*

- 5.25. The development proposals for both Scenario 02 and Scenario 04 will result in a notable change of character to the Site. Simply, the matter for consideration is one of whether the presence of built form within the Site will affect the way one experiences the heritage significance of the buried remains of the Roman Town and its environs.
- 5.26. The experience of the buried remains within the scheduled areas will in no meaningful way be altered by the presence of either of the development scenarios. Whether or not the development will be visible from areas within the scheduled monument(s) is not a relevant consideration in this specific case, when so much of the heritage significance is the evidential value and the present landscape character of the Site (and the scheduled area to its south) possess no features to signify the presence of what is buried below ground. Again, the exception is the specific location of the Town itself (lying in the centre of the scheduled area) where the outline of the extant field boundaries, lane and earthwork allow a well-informed observer to recognise the former presence of the walls / defences; however, at this location the Site (and proposed development) is far removed from any aspect or view so as to render the change imperceptible.
- 5.27. Therefore, what remains is whether the change of the character of the Site will adversely affect the experience of the buried archaeological remains within the Site; remains, as set out above, that are likely to be associated with the Roman Town's agricultural environs. In this specific case, the mostly unbuilt character of the Site (acknowledging the presence of the Faccenda complex in the south-west) is a very peripheral component of the heritage significance of the remains, therefore, the change of character will not be a material impact considering the already acknowledged loss of evidential value (see below).
- 5.28. With regard to the effect of development on the evidential value of any surviving buried archaeological remains within the Site, this has already been dealt with in Section 3 above. Following the directions within GPA one would conclude that

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these remains lie within the setting of the scheduled monuments but as discussed above, a binary narrative of 'inside or outside' of the scheduled area does not aid an interpretation of significance and whether an impact will occur. In any case and in summary, harm will come to the evidential value of remains associated those that lie outside the scheduled area(s). However, these remains themselves are not of a significance to warrant scheduling. In respect of belowground impacts, a programme of archaeological mitigation fieldwork to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority Planning Archaeologist would be an industry standard and proportionate mitigation strategy.

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## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. This assessment has included a review of a comprehensive range of available sources, in accordance with key industry guidance, in order to identify known and potential heritage assets located within the Site and its environs which may be affected by the proposals. The significance of the identified known and potential heritage assets has been determined, as far as possible, on the basis of available evidence. The potential effects of the proposals on the significance of identified heritage assets, including any potential physical effects upon buried archaeological remains, and potential non-physical effects resulting from the anticipated changes to the settings of heritage assets, have been assessed. Any physical or non-physical effects of the proposals upon the significance of the heritage resource will be a material consideration in the determination of the planning application for the proposal. The Site, with exception of the Faccenda chicken farm, is an allocated development site as part of the Cherwell District Council Local Plan. The Alchester Site Scheduled Monument was designated prior to the time of allocation.
- 6.2. An archaeological evaluation within the Site (CA 2019) identified an area of funerary activity of possible later prehistoric or Roman date. Four cremation burials were identified as possible later prehistoric to Roman date. The extent of the funerary activity is unknown; however the four cremation burials were concentrated within one trench and are considered likely to represent a discreet area of funerary activity.
- 6.3. Later prehistoric to Roman ditches containing pottery sherds and faunal remains were also identified within the Site and are considered likely to be associated with the land management in the area. Historic ridge and furrow earthworks have been identified within the north-western extent of the Site. The remnant earthworks are barely discernible within the Site and as such retain limited heritage significance.
- 6.4. To the south of the Site lie the remains of the Roman Town of Alchester and its associated agricultural hinterland and other features such as a military parade ground and marching camp. These buried remains are designated as scheduled monuments and the northern extent of the scheduled area extends to abut the southern extent of the Site. The remains of the Roman period land management systems discovered within the Site are associated with the agricultural hinterland of the Roman Town. The association with the wider extant and buried remains of the

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Roman Town increases the evidential value (significance) of the remains within the Site; however, they are not of such significance to warrant scheduling or preservation in situ.

- 6.5. The development proposals for both current Masterplans will result in a notable change of character to the Site. However, the presence of built form within the Site will not affect the way one experiences the heritage significance of the buried remains of the former Roman town and its environs. The heritage significance is the evidential value and the present landscape character of the Site (and the scheduled areas to its south) possess no features to signify the presence of what is buried below ground, aside from the specific location of the former defended area of the town. The outline of the extant field boundaries, lane and earthwork allow a well-informed observer to recognise the former presence of the walls and defences; however, at this location the Site (and proposed development) is far removed from any aspect or view so as to render the change imperceptible.
- 6.6. The change of the character of the Site is a very peripheral competent of the heritage significance of the remains, therefore, the change of character will not be a material impact considering the already acknowledged loss of evidential value.
- 6.7. The remains recorded within the Site lie within the setting of the Scheduled Monuments, however this does not aid an interpretation of significance and whether an impact will occur. In any case and in summary, harm will come to the evidential value of remains associated with those that lie outside the scheduled area(s). However, these remains themselves are not of a significance to warrant scheduling or preservation in situ and can be recorded through a programme of archaeological mitigation fieldwork.
- 6.8. A programme of archaeological mitigation fieldwork to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority Planning Archaeologist and undertaken in advance of construction would be an industry standard and proportionate mitigation strategy. On the basis of the currently available information, it is considered that there are no overriding heritage constraints to the proposed development of the Site. However, further archaeological work will be required to ensure compliance with the NPPF (2019) and the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Cherwell District Council 2015). In addition, once final designs have been prepared these should be reviewed to confirm the conclusions presented within this assessment.

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