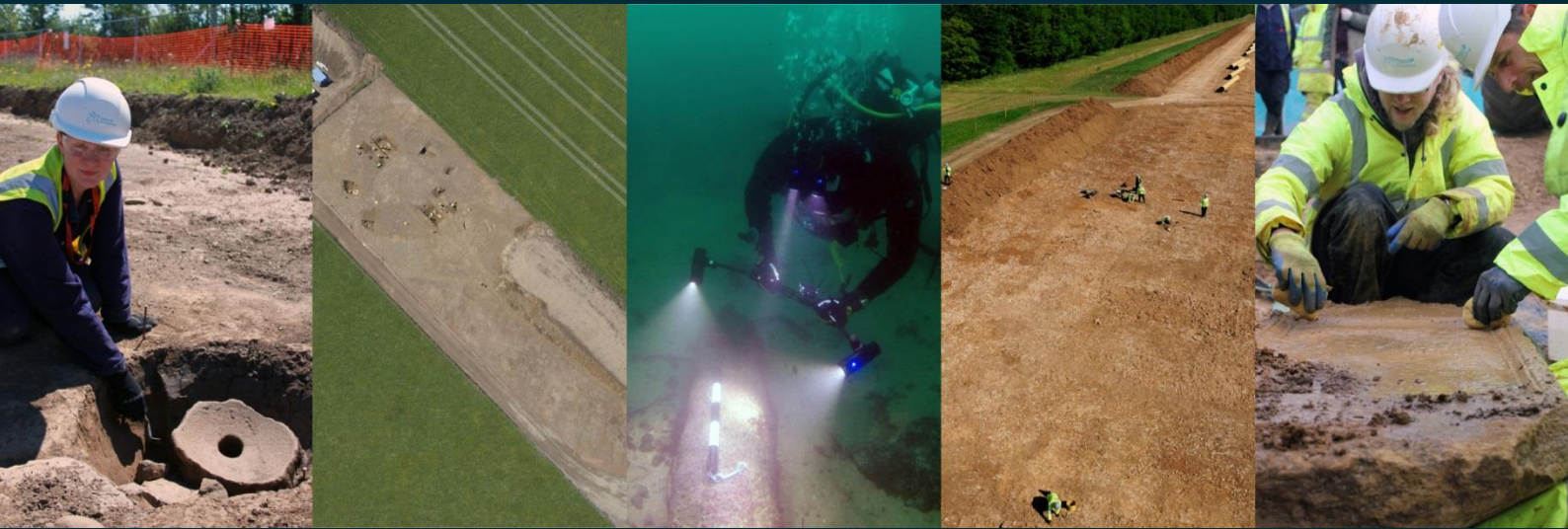


Bicester Gateway Bicester Oxfordshire

Archaeological Summary Note



for
Bicester Gateway Ltd

CA Project: MK0198
CA Report: MK0198_1

February 2020



Bicester Gateway
Bicester
Oxfordshire

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Appendix B Geophysical Survey Report

Appendix C Evaluation report

Appendix D OCCAS Brief 2017

The appendices are provided as separate documents due to files sizes



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2020 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) were commissioned by Bicester Gateway Ltd (the Client) to produce a Summary Note (this document) to support a forthcoming planning application for outline planning consent with all matters reserved except access, in respect of Bicester Gateway Phase 1B and an additional land parcel at the south west of the site in Bicester, Oxfordshire, hereafter 'the site' (centred at NGR 457200 221000).
- 1.2 An earlier planning application 16/02586/OUT, submitted to Cherwell District Council (CDC) in December 2016, was permitted in July 2017. This earlier application related to Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B. The development proposals for Bicester Gateway Phase 1B have been revised as detailed in the Design and Access Statement produced by Space Strategy (2020). Figure 1 shows the permitted indicative masterplan from 2017 overlaid with the current proposed indicative building footprints, to show the key changes to the proposals.
- 1.3 The redline area includes additional land at the south west, not previously within the site boundary (identified as watching brief area B on Figure 2 for referencing purposes). It is understood that, although this area falls within the redline boundary, the Regulating Plan shows that it will not be built-on. All final works in this area will be subject to reserved matters but currently comprise tree works and access road re-surfacing works required to tidy up this area and make it safe for pedestrians and cyclists in accordance with requests received from various stakeholders (including the Parish Council, Stantec and Cordle Design). Accordingly, whilst this area is identified as watching brief area B on Figure 2 it is likely that there will be no intrusive below ground works in this area of the site.
- 1.4 This Summary Note and associated revised scheme will be submitted to CDC, who are advised on archaeological matters by Richard Oram, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning Archaeologist (OCCPA). All documents referenced in this summary are listed in the bibliography (Section 4).
- 1.5 This note is intended to support the current outline planning application with all matters reserved except access, and to provide a brief summary of the archaeological work within the site (located as shown on Figure 1) to-date. Following archaeological fieldwork (as detailed in Section 2) within the site the Client

commissioned an *Archaeological Protection Measures* report from a civil and structural engineers in January 2017 (Hamill Davies Ltd 2017). Subsequently, and after approval of planning application 16/02586/OUT the OCCPA provided a *Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action* setting out the mitigation requirements including excavation and physical preservation in-situ (Oram 2017a). The *Archaeological Protection Measures* report (Hamill Davies Ltd 2017) provided in January 2017 comprises the method statement referred to in the Brief (Oram 2017a). A mitigation proposal plan was not agreed in 2017. However, the Brief (Oram 2017a) set out the requirements for a 'full set-piece excavation' and 'physical preservation in-situ'. The Brief noted:

' An archaeological evaluation has been undertaken on this proposed site which has recorded a number of archaeological deposits dating to the Roman period, spanning the 1st to 4th centuries AD with activity concentrated in the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. These included probable floor surfaces and a possible oven or kiln along with a number of ditches and pits. The remains were located within a discrete area of the site, proposed for car parking, and the applicant has submitted a method statement setting out how these features will be preserved in situ. This is an appropriate scheme for preservation. A programme of archaeological investigation and mitigation will still be required for the rest of the site but following the removal of the area of dense Roman deposits we are satisfied that this can be secured through an appropriately worded condition as suggested above (Oram 2017a).'

- 1.6 The purpose of the Hamill Davies Method Statement (Hamill Davies Ltd 2017) is described in that document as follows:

'This Method Statement explains how, during detailed design and the course of construction, the developer of Bicester Gateway will protect the archaeology in Phase 1B.' Further that, 'The idea is that the archaeological remains in this area will be preserved in situ, with no buildings, no ground penetrating foundations, and no tree planting permitted.' The Method Statement concludes: 'We are currently at the outline planning application stage. Conditions will be imposed to protect the archaeology identified by Cotswold Archaeology in the southeast corner of Phase 1B. These conditions will prohibit intrusive works such as digging, foundations, services and tree planting in this area, and pre-commencement conditions will require the submission and approval of a detailed report that provides for the installation of horizontal bunds and a CCS, or such other system, that will ensure the

archaeology remains undisturbed and preserved in situ in accordance with the principles outlined in this Method Statement. Cotswold Archaeology will hold a Watching Brief and will be on hand to advise throughout the detailed design and construction phases.'

- 1.7 As detailed above, Figure 1 shows the permitted indicative masterplan overlaid with the current proposed indicative building footprints, to show the possible changes to the proposed development. Figure 2 is intended to provide a proposed archaeological mitigation plan, addressing the updated indicative site masterplan. This plan (Figure 2) will need to be approved by the OCCPA as part of the current outline planning application. An earlier draft of Figure 2 was passed to the OCCPA for comment at the pre-application stage in December 2019 and he suggested by email on 23rd January 2020 (Oram 2020 pers.comm) that a larger area would be required for preservation in-situ, including the area that is identified on the current proposed mitigation plan as 'To be determined.' The area identified as 'To be determined' was not included in the geophysical survey in 2016 (PCG) and did not have any trial trenches positioned within it during the trial trench evaluation carried out in 2016 (CA 2016b) due to the presence of trees. Furthermore, the current proposals are for the principal of development and access but the layout is only indicative at this stage. The building footprints will be addressed at the reserved matters stage and it is possible that there will be no proposed buildings within the 'To be determined area.' The OCCPA will need to be consulted regarding the archaeological requirements and it is likely that the OCCPA will provide a Brief for any fieldwork. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will also need to be prepared and approved by the OCCPA in advance of any site work commencing.

The site

- 1.8 Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B comprises an area of highways accommodation land, located between Wendlebury Road to the east, and the A41 (Oxford Road) to the west, located as shown on Figure 1 in the evaluation report (CA 2016a) . Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B are divided into two fields by a slip road (Entrance Boulevard known as Vendee Drive) connecting Wendlebury Road in the east to the roundabout on the A41 (Oxford Road) in the west, as shown on Figure 2 in the evaluation report (CA 2016a). The ground surface changes from c. 65m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the west to c. 67m aOD in the east. The forthcoming application relates to the southern field only (Bicester Gateway Phase

1B), located to the south of Entrance Boulevard as shown on Figure 1 within this document.

- 1.9 The underlying geology within the site is mapped as Kellaways Sand Member, comprising interbedded sandstone and siltstone of the Jurassic Period. This is overlain in the west of the site by superficial Quaternary river terrace deposits and by superficial Quaternary alluvial deposit, comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel across the remainder of the site (BGS 2020).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 2.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been presented in detail in the Heritage Desk Based Assessment (HDBA, CA 2016a) (Appendix A) commissioned by the Client to support of the previous planning application (Application 16/02586/OUT). Subsequently, a geophysical survey (PCG 2016) (Appendix B) and a trial trench evaluation (CA 2016b) (Appendix C) were carried out. The archaeological and historical background of the site is taken from the HDBA (CA 2016a), the geophysical survey (PCG 2016) and the trial trench evaluation report (CA 2016b) but is only summarised here in brief to assist with the following discussion on the ongoing requirements. A full summary is available in each document comprising and the HDBA (CA 2016a) (Appendix A), the geophysical survey report (PCG 2016) (Appendix B) and the trial trench evaluation report (CA 2016b) (Appendix C) and these should be referred to for the archaeological and historical background and the results of the previous fieldwork.
- 2.2 The HDBA (CA 2016a) was prepared for Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B and land to the immediate east, now known as Bicester Catalyst or Bicester Gateway Phase 2 (the western boundary of which is shown on Figure 1). The geophysical survey (PCG 2016) and trial trenching (CA 2016b) were carried out across Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B. As detailed in Section 1 following approval of planning application 16/02586/OUT Richard Oram, the OCCPA provided a *Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action* setting out the mitigation requirements including excavation and physical preservation in-situ (Oram 2017a). These documents should be referred to for further background information and are provided as appendices to this summary note (as separate PDF's due to file sizes) comprising:

- Appendix A- Heritage Desk Based Assessment
- Appendix B Geophysical Survey Report
- Appendix C Evaluation report
- Appendix D OCCAS Brief 2017

- 2.3 The HDBA highlighted the presence of Roman Alchester (*Aelia Castra*) a walled town surrounded by a large extra-mural settlement, the extent of which is designated as a Scheduled Monument (SM). The plan of the walled town and extra-mural settlement was defined during an aerial photographic interpretation project undertaken by the RCHME during 1996 (CA, 2016a: 32). Cropmarks were recorded within the Bicester Catalyst / Bicester Gateway Phase 2 site, extending north from the extra-mural settlement on a slightly modified alignment, suggesting a field system post-dating the Roman town. The HDBA noted two previous archaeological investigations in which remains relating to the extra-mural settlement were uncovered and recorded (See Sections 4.27 to 4.40 of the HDBA for further details).
- 2.4 Investigations were undertaken by Oxford University Department for External Studies in 1983 (Foreman & Rahtz, 1984), as part of a rescue project associated with development at the Faccenda Chicken Farm to the immediate east of the site (located as shown on Fig.2). The excavation recorded a system of parallel drainage ditches containing waterlogged material which was interpreted as the remains of a series of midden deposits originating from the adjacent settlement. These were later identified by the aerial photographic interpretation project as part of a wider field system to the north of the extra-mural settlement (RCHME, 1996).
- 2.5 Further within the southern part of the current site and to the west, work undertaken by Oxford Archaeology during works to widen the A421 (re-designated the A41) in 1991 (Wendlebury-Bicester Duelling: Sites B and C) (Booth et al. 2001) recorded more substantial remains, including ditch systems, buildings, yards and enclosures within the footprint of the former A421 slip road (located as shown on Fig.2). These features were interpreted as part of the extra-mural settlement occupying the area between the Alchester to Towcester (aligned east to west) and Akeman Street (aligned north to south) Roman roads. The depth of deposits (from 0.3-0.6m below present ground level) encountered within Site B which comprised an area at the south of the current site (located as shown on Figure 2) suggested that it had not

been subject to intensive cultivation. However, the construction of the slip-road itself is likely to have removed any remaining archaeological features within the footprint of the slip-road and embankment area. As detailed in Section 1 this area and the adjoining area at the south of the site (identified as watching brief area B on Figure 2) was not previously included within the redline area. It is understood that although this area falls within the redline boundary, the Regulating Plan states that it will not be built-on. All final works in this area will be subject to reserved matters but currently comprise non-intrusive works as detailed in Section 1.

- 2.6. The HDBA was followed by an archaeological geophysical survey (PCG 2016), undertaken to define the extent of potential archaeological features within Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B areas, and to inform a subsequent scheme of archaeological trial trenching (CA 2016b). The geophysical survey recorded an array of ditches and pits along the south eastern boundary and south eastern corner of the site, including an area which was identified as a possible industrial zone. Linear anomalies interpreted as ridge and furrow were recorded across the southern end of site, which were considered likely to have masked anomalies associated with the Roman settlement. Tree growth in the vicinity of the south boundary of the site prevented investigation and recording in the area identified as 'to be determined' on Figure 2.

- 2.7 Trial trenching within Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B (CA 2016b) areas confirmed the results of the geophysics. These findings also correspond with those in Site B from the former A421 works (Booth et al. 2001) in the southern part of the site. The southern part of the site contained Roman features spanning the 1st to 4th centuries AD, with activity predominantly concentrated in the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. Although no definitive structural evidence was identified during the trial trenching (CA 2016b) a number of the excavated features appeared to represent settlement activity, which is supported by the finds and environmental evidence. The charred plant remains provide some indication of domestic settlement activities taking place in the area during the Roman period, particularly in the vicinity of Trench 5 (Fig 2), while the animal bone would appear to be typical of occupation of a small-scale rural settlement. This is consistent with the nature of the settlement activity recorded in the southern part of the site during the former A421 works (Booth et al. 2002).

- 2.8 The proposed development site to the immediate east designated as Bicester Catalyst/Bicester Gateway Phase 2, was subject to a geophysical survey in November 2018 (Archaeological Surveys 2018) which confirmed the presence of further anomalies which were revealed on a different alignment to those identified by the RCHME Study (RCHME, 1996). These were interpreted as a possible extension of the Roman period field system.
- 2.9 Trial trenching was carried out on the Bicester Catalyst/Bicester Gateway Phase 2 site in March 2019 (CA 2019) which confirmed the presence of archaeological features associated with the geophysical anomalies. The features were found to represent the remains of a late prehistoric to Early Roman field system, with associated evidence for farming settlement and a small concentration of cremation burials. Many of the trenches in the north and west of the Bicester Catalyst/Bicester Gateway Phase 2 site demonstrated evidence for quarrying and water management, in common with the discoveries at Faccenda Chicken Farm (Foreman & Rahtz, 1984) and the Bicester Gateway evaluation (CA 2016b). The HDBA suggested (at Section 4.37 of the HDBA) that ‘the Faccenda site might therefore represent the maximum extent of activity within the Alchester town environs, when attempts were being made to drain and enclose the land (CA 2016a).’ It is considered likely that the trial trenching carried out at Bicester Gateway and Bicester Catalyst/Bicester Gateway Phase 2 relate broadly contemporary activity.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 As detailed above the HDBA (CA 2016a) (Appendix A), the geophysical survey report (PCG 2016) (Appendix B) and the trial trench evaluation report (CA 2016b) (Appendix C) should be referred to for the archaeological and historical background and the results of the previous fieldwork. Richard Oram, the OCCPA, has highlighted the significance of the archaeological features discovered during the 2016 trial trenching (CA 2016b). In response to the submission of Planning Application 16/02586/OUT the OCCPA recommended a full set-piece excavation, a watching brief and preservation in-situ as per the Hamill Davies Method Statement and the *Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action* (Oram 2017a).
- 3.2 The revised proposed indicative masterplan extends the south-western indicative building footprint into the area formerly identified as indicative car parking (as shown on Figure 1). However, the building footprints remain indicative at this stage

and will be determined at the reserved matters stage. This area is shown as 'To be determined' on Figure 2. As detailed in Section 1 the earlier geophysical survey (PCG 2016) did not survey this area and no trenches were positioned in this area during the trial trenching (CA 2016b) due to the presence of trees. However, it is considered likely that archaeological remains may have extended into this area based on the results of the earlier fieldwork (PCG 2016 and CA 2016b) and works as part of the former A421 works (Booth et al. 2001). It is possible that any remains if present in the area identified as 'to be determined' have been disturbed by the construction of the adjoining slip road and embankment. As no fieldwork was carried out in this part of the site in 2016 the presence or absence of archaeological remains has not been determined.

3.3 As detailed in Section 1 a mitigation proposal plan was not agreed in 2017. However, the Brief (Oram 2017a) set out the requirements for some 'full set-piece excavation' and 'physical preservation in-situ' and noted that 'the applicant has submitted a method statement setting out how these features will be preserved in situ.' Richard Oram also noted by email in August 2017 that: 'I have specified an open area strip of the areas around office 3 and 4, surrounding trench 5. The main area of Roman archaeology will be preserved in-situ as set out in the protection report. I have also specified that a watching brief will need to be maintained during this section of the scheme to ensure that the measures set out in this report are undertaken appropriately (Oram 2017b pers.comm).' Accordingly three types of mitigation were identified comprising:

- Preservation in-situ
- Open area strip
- Watching Brief

3.4 In December 2019 the Client commissioned Cotswold Archaeology to put together a proposed mitigation plan. An earlier draft of Figure 2 was prepared showing areas for preservation in-situ, open area strip and watching brief. Following approval of the project team this proposed mitigation plan was submitted to Richard Oram, the OCCPA for comment in December 2019 and he advised by email on 23rd January 2020 (Oram 2020 pers.comm) that a larger area would be required for preservation in-situ, specifically the area that is identified on the current proposed mitigation plan (Figure 2) as 'To be determined.' As detailed above, this area of the site was not surveyed by geophysical survey (PCG 2016) and did not have any trial trenches

positioned within it during the trial trench evaluation (CA 2016b) due to presence of trees. This application seeks to agree an appropriate updated mitigation strategy and scope of works during the course of the planning application determination period. The OCCPA will need to be consulted regarding the archaeological requirements and it is likely that the OCCPA will provide a Brief for any fieldwork.

- 3.5 In summary, it is intended to agree a position based on the approved outline mitigation scheme for the extant consent, extended slightly to cover a small additional area that requires further, determining investigations (as shown on Figure 2). The OCCPA will need to be consulted regarding the mitigation and it is likely that the OCCPA will provide a Brief for any such work, if it is agreed that additional mitigation is pertinent. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will also need to be prepared and approved by the OCCPA in advance of any site work commencing.
- 3.6 In accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF the programme of archaeological work carried out in 2016 provides a sufficiently detailed understanding of the heritage and archaeological resource of the site, and of its significance, to inform the planning application. In summary, there are no overriding heritage constraints which would preclude development, and limited harm that would come from the loss of archaeological remains should be assessed in the planning balance against the public benefits. Furthermore, dialogue is on-going regarding opportunities for an appropriate scheme of mitigation.

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