

**OS Parcel 2200 Adjoining Oxford Road North of Promised Land Farm, Oxford Road
Bicester
Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action**

1. SUMMARY OF BRIEF:

- 1.1 This Project Brief provides the outline framework for a detailed costed Project Design to MAP2 specifications covering a timetabled programme of archaeological investigation, recording analysis and publication.
- 1.2 An archaeological field evaluation has established the presence of archaeological features the application site. The application has been approved with conditions attached that require a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of the development.

2. BACKGROUND:

2.1 Site Location and Description

- 2.1.1 The site of proposed development is located to the south west of Bicester, on the southern side of the A41 and immediately north of the scheduled Roman Town of Alchester (SP 5731 2113). The geology is shown as River Terrace Deposits overlying Kellaway sand Member. The site lies at approximately 65m OD and is currently an unused agricultural plot.

2.2 Planning Background

- 2.2.1 Planning permission has been granted for Phase 1 of the proposed new business park ("Bicester Gateway") comprising up to 14,972 sq m (Gross External Area) of B1 employment based buildings, plus a hotel (up to 149 bedrooms), with associated infrastructure, car parking and marketing boards (16/02586/OUT).
- 2.2.2 Archaeological evaluation has established that there are archaeological features within the site and conditions have been attached that require a programme of archaeological recording to be undertaken in advance of the development.

Condition 18 requires that a written scheme of investigation (WSI) is approved in advance of the development commencing. Condition 19 requires this recording action is undertaken in accordance with the WSI approved under Condition 18.

This brief outlines our requirements for the recording action.

2.3 Archaeological Background

- 2.3.1 The site is located in an area of archaeological considerable archaeological interest immediately north of the scheduled Roman Town of Alchester (SM 18). The Roman Road north from the Town to Towcester forms the eastern boundary of the proposed development area. Another Roman Road, Akeman Street, forms the southern boundary of the site. An archaeological excavation during the A41 widening recorded a significant amount of extra mural settlement on the southern edge of the proposed development area consisting of stone building foundations, roadways, pits and ditches. A cemetery was found immediately to the north of this

site, on the northern side of the A41. Evidence of Iron Age settlement was also recorded along with archaeological features dating to the post Roman period.

- 2.3.2 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.
- 2.3.3 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.

3. OBJECTIVES:

- 3.1 This integrated programme of archaeological mitigation work has been required in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and has been secured through a negative condition attached to the planning permission. The archaeological works will be carried out in accordance with a Project Design that shall provide a comprehensive mitigation strategy and project planning programme to MAP2 standard based on clearly defined research objectives.
- 3.2 The mitigation strategy will seek to alleviate damage to significant archaeological deposits/features, and the developer will be responsible for ensuring this by:-
- a) implementing a full set-piece excavation to deal with all significant remains. If areas of low significance are revealed during the programme these may be dealt with, if agreed by the planning archaeologist, through selective recording action or smaller scale sampling. A watching brief may also be implemented during construction if deemed necessary.
 - b) and where practical and feasible, or where the status and survival quality of the remains is deemed to be of national importance (using the Secretary of States Non-Statutory Criteria), physical preservation in situ.

4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

- 4.1 Prior to any development within the site an area of open area excavation will need to be undertaken in the Phase 1B area of the site around the new office units 3 and 4 as well as any other areas of ground disturbance within this area. This area will be stripped of topsoil under constant archaeological supervision. A phased approach to this for logistical reasons would be acceptable. A plan showing the areas to be stripped will be agreed in advance of the WSI being approved. The area or areas will be cleaned and all features will be recorded on plan.
- 4.2 Once the planning phase is completed a site visit will be arranged and the sampling strategy agreed between the archaeological contractor (acting on behalf of the applicant) and County Archaeological Services. The following sampling percentages are to provide an indication of the level of sampling that will be

required through this iterative approach. **Any changes to this strategy should be subject to the agreement of County Archaeological Services and the Project Manager of the archaeological contractor undertaking the recording.**

- 4.3 All structural features or those relating to a specialised activity will be subject to a 100% sample. All post and stake holes that relate to specialised activities will be subject to a 100% sample. Others will be subject to a 50% sample. A 50% sample of all pits will be undertaken. Up to 10% or 10 metres, whichever is greater, of all linear features will be sampled. All kilns, hearths etc. will be sampled and excavated. Appropriate samples will be taken for carbon dating. Dateable features will be sampled for environmental analysis.
- 4.4 All gold or silver artefacts will be reported to the Coroner in line with the Treasure Act 1996.
- 4.5 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) should be submitted to CAS for written approval in advance of the commencement of any excavations.
- 4.6 Research aims should be in line with the Solent-Thames Research Framework and should aim to investigate and inform our understanding of the wider historical landscape.
- 4.7 No parts of the excavation areas will be handed back to the developer until written confirmation that they have been signed off is obtained from County Archaeological Services. A post excavation plan showing the features and interventions along with grid references will need to be provided for any sign off areas in advance of this written confirmation.
- 4.8 **No features will be excavated by machine unless formally agreed with County Archaeological Services in advance.**
- 4.9 An archaeological watching brief will be maintained during the car park construction within the area of archaeological importance as set out in the archaeological protection report submitted with the planning application. This watching brief is to ensure that the measures set out in this report are applied appropriately and that the construction of the car park does not impact on these preserved archaeological remains. Any variation to this agreed protection scheme will need to be agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service before the work is undertaken.

5. PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION:

- 5.1 All stages of the project shall be carried out in accordance with the procedures laid down in Management of Archaeological Projects 1991 (MAP2).
- 5.2 The project shall be under the control of a named, qualified archaeologist who should preferably be a Member of the Institute of field Archaeologists registered with an appropriate area/s of competence.
- 5.3 The data collection strategy should be part of a structured academic research agenda based on local and national research priorities. Data recovery and recording levels should be clearly defined and should be appropriate to the particular stratified deposits under investigation.

- 5.4 Include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds and advise, or report on, other aspects of the investigation including environmental sampling and analysis. An agreed allowance should be made for their fees.
- 5.5 Topsoil stripping, under the supervision of an competent archaeologist, shall be taken down to the significant archaeological horizon in level spits. Spoil will be monitored in order to recover artefacts.
- 5.6 Appropriate machinery must be used, with an appropriate bucket e.g. a 360° excavator with a toothless ditching bucket/blade. Choice should be influenced by prevailing site conditions, and the machine must be able to carry out a clean job.
- 5.7 Should any human remains be encountered, they shall only be removed in accordance with the relevant Home Office regulations.

6. MONITORING AND LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS:

- 6.1 Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services Officers, shall monitor progress and standards throughout the project. To facilitate this, the Project Design will include, in addition to a full projected timetable, staffing details etc.

OCAS shall be notified of the official start date at least 2 weeks prior to the commencement of work in order to arrange a date for monitoring visits. A number of site visits will be required and the area of excavation will need to be formally signed off in writing before any development commences.

- 6.2 A charge of £50 will be made for up to two monitoring visits, a charge of £100 for three to five visits and a charge of £150 will be made for more than five visits.

7. POST-EXCAVATION/SITE ARCHIVE REQUIREMENT:

- 7.1 All post excavation/site archive work shall be carried out according to the standards and procedures defined in MoRPHE. The developer shall be responsible for all processing, research, analysis, and investigative/stabilising conservation necessary to prepare the site archive for preservation and storage in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication. All conservation shall be carried out to U.K.I.C. Guideline Standards, and the site archive will be prepared according to the procedures specified in "Required Procedures for Transference of Archaeological Archives to Oxfordshire Museums; 1995". The County Museums Service Collections Management section shall be contacted before the site work has begun. A PX Assessment Report shall be sent to County Archaeological Service for verification and comments.

8. ARCHIVE DEPOSITION:

- 8.1 The contracted archaeological organisation will endeavour to ensure that the full integrated site archive including all finds shall be deposited after completion of post-excavation work with the County Museums Service (Oxfordshire Museums) unless another repository is indicated. If, during the course of excavation, items are found that may be potentially defined as 'Treasure' under the Code of Practice for the Treasure Act 1996, the archaeological contractor will be responsible for ensuring that the County Coroner is informed.

- 8.2 Oxfordshire Museums requires that deposited archives from developer-led archaeological work shall be accompanied by funding equivalent to the current English Heritage Box Storage Grant. Archaeological organisations shall therefore include an estimate of the costs of deposition for this project in their tender. The estimated cost will be clearly shown and shall be calculated in accordance with the procedures set out in "Charge for Archaeological Archives Deposited with Oxfordshire Museums" *Oxfordshire Museums* 1995.
- 8.3 In the event of the legal owner(s) resolving to retain all or part of the site archive, they shall be responsible for the future preservation and maintenance of any material element of that archive. That part of the site archive in question, shall be transferred to the legal owner only after; all necessary processing, research, analysis and investigative/stabilising conservation and correct packing necessary to prepare the archive for preservation and in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication, has been completed. The owner shall ensure that all necessary provision is made for the long-term preservation of the archive in a satisfactory environment, and that it is accessible for future research. The contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that a proper record of material is kept by the landowner shall be included in the written archive and public record. The explicit (written) permission of the owner shall be obtained for the latter in order that the *Data Protection Act 1984* is not contravened.
- 8.4 A digital copy of the summary report (either in pdf or .doc format) and any digital data generated as a part of the work (such as GIS or CAD files) shall be supplied to the office of the County Archaeological Officer; for verification and assessment by the CAO or his representative; when the report has been agreed a final digital copy will then be supplied to the County Historic Environment Record (HER), along with a selection of digital images showing the main features, at archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk on the understanding that it will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months).
- 8.5 GIS (shape) files of the final phased excavated site plan should be provided to the office of the County Archaeological Officer.
- 8.6 The County Museums Service shall be notified in advance, of the expected time limits for deposition of the archive.

9. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION:

- 9.1 Full publication of the results should be guaranteed, and should take place within a reasonable length of time (normally not more than five years after completion of the work). Style and format to be determined by the archaeological organisation, with regard to agreed standards of archaeological publication, and the house style of the appropriate local, regional or national publication.
- 9.2 The report should state the location of the archive and acknowledge the curatorial role played in the project by Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services. It should also acknowledge any provision of information from the County Historic Environment Record which is copyright of Oxfordshire County Council. Any secondary reports or articles generated by this project shall similarly acknowledge County Archaeological Services and the HER.

9.3 With regard to publication; the level of the report should take into account the scale of the project, the overall importance of the site based on English Heritage characterisation criteria, and its status within local and regional research strategies. It should also be commensurate with the level of results obtained.

10. OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL Environment & Economy

COUNTY MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE STORE

Witney Road, Standlake, Oxon OX8 7QG

Archaeological Curator: David Moon - 01865 300557
Conservation Laboratory: - 01865 300937

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES CONTACTS: Address on our letters

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Principle Archaeologist: Hugh Coddington

Tel: 07917001019 **Email:** hugh.coddington@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters relating to: West Oxfordshire District Council, Vale District Council. Minerals applications; Thames Water plc Countywide.

Planning Archaeologist: Richard Oram

Tel: 07917001026 **Email:** Richard.oram@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters relating to: Cherwell and South Oxfordshire District Councils and Countywide highway applications.

*(All other dealings with national and regional bodies/utility Companies are shared between **Hugh Coddington and Richard Oram** on a District basis).*

County Historic Environment Record

Historic Environment Record Officer: Susan Lisk

Tel: 07917001024 **Email:** susan.lisk@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for management, development and appointment-based access to the HER.

Richard Oram
Planning Archaeologist
County Archaeological Services

15th August 2017