# Bicester Gateway (Phase 1B)
# Bicester
# Oxfordshire

*Archaeological Mitigation Strategy*

*for*
Bicester Gateway Ltd

CA Project: MK0198
CA Report: MK0198_1

June 2020



Andover Cirencester Exeter Milton Keynes Suffolk

# Bicester Gateway (Phase 1B)
# Bicester
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## Archaeological Mitigation Strategy
CA Project: MK0198
CA Report: MK0198_1

| Document Control Grid | | | | | | |
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| A | 30th January 2020 | Jake Streatfeild-James | MLC | DRAFT | Internal Review | MLC |
| B | 3rd February 2020 | Jake Streatfeild-James | MLC | DRAFT | Client Team Comment | MLC |
| | 5th May 2020 | Rob Sutton | (client team) | Final | For LPA comment | RPS |
| | | | | | | |

## CONTENTS



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



## LIST OF APPENDICIES

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In January 2020 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) were commissioned by Bicester Gateway Ltd (the Client) to produce a Summary Note 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). Fig. 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 "Preservation in Situ" on Fig. 2). 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). These works are of a nature that will not require construction work to a depth that could disturb buried archaeological remains (i.e. they will be 'cosmetic enhancements' such as vegetation clearance, improvements to pavements etc...).

1.4 This Document updates the Summary Note, following consultation with Mr. Richard Oram, Oxfordshire County Council's Planning Archaeologist (OCCPA), advisor to CDC. All documents referenced in this summary are listed in the bibliography (Section 4).

1.5 This document 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 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). The Brief (Oram 2017a) sets out the requirements for a 'full set-piece excavation' (the open area strip and watching brief referred to in section 3 below) 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, prosed 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.'

1.7 As detailed above, Fig. 1 shows the permitted indicative masterplan overlaid with the current proposed indicative building footprints, to show the possible changes to the proposed development. Fig. 2 provides an archaeological mitigation plan, addressing the updated indicative site masterplan. The current proposals are for the principle of development and access. The layout is only indicative at this stage. The location of the building footprints will be addressed at the reserved matters stage.

**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 Fig. 1 in the evaluation report (CA 2016a) . Bicester Gateway Phases 1A and 1B are divided into two fields by a slip road (known as Vendee Drive) connecting Wendlebury Road in the east to the roundabout on the A41 (Oxford Road) in the west, as shown on Fig. 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 current application relates to the southern field only (Bicester Gateway Phase 1B), located to the south of Vendee Drive as shown on Fig. 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 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 the *Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action* sets out the mitigation requirements including excavation and physical preservation in-situ (Oram 2017a).

2.3 The HDBA highlighted the presence of Roman Alchester *(Aelia Castra)* a former 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 (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 suggested that it had not been subject to intensive cultivation. However, the construction of the slip-road itself may have removed any remaining archaeological features within the footprint of the slip-road and the embankment area.

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.

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 works on the former A421 (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). This survey confirmed the presence of further anomalies 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 to broadly contemporary activity.

## 3. MITIGATING THE IMPACTS

3.1 The principles of the mitigation strategy for the scheme, to be controlled by standard planning conditions, are as follows:

- Further investigations;
- Preservation in-situ of significant buried archaeological remains; and
- Archaeological excavation, recording and publication.

**Further investigations**

3.2 Further investigation is proposed in a single discrete location where tree coverage had previously prevented geophysical survey and trial trenching. This is located in the central-southern part of the site (see Fig. 2). There is the potential for buried archaeological remains to survive in this area, as indicated by the discovery of remains in proximity to the north and east. However, the construction of the embankment and slip road may have truncated any remains that may have survived until the late 20th century. This potential requires further investigation to allow for a more definitive statement to be made.

3.3 The scope of this work will be agreed via written scheme of investigation to be approved by OCCPA, on behalf of CDC. However, this work is likely to comprise the excavation of two trial trenches.

3.4 The extent and significance of any surviving remains in this discrete area will dictate the nature of any further mitigation. This may take the form of preservation in situ (see below) of discovered archaeological remains deemed to be of particular rare significance (i.e. of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments – see footnote 63 of the NPPF). If archaeological remains of lesser significance are discovered archaeological excavation (see below) is likely to be a more proportionate, and industry standard response.

3.5 With the layout of building footprints only indicative at this stage, it would be proportionate for these further investigations, in this single, discrete location to be undertaken as a standard condition of the consented application. As the detailed design for the scheme begins to evolve, post-consent, the specific location of the trial trenches can be targeted to best inform the process. Furthermore, the same or an associated condition could dictate that these works are to be undertaken

sufficiently in advance of a reserved matters application to ensure that they inform the layout and the potential construction methodology to be adopted.

**Preservation in-situ**

3.6 To safeguard the most significant buried archaeological remains, an area in the south-eastern part of the site is proposed for preservation in situ (see Fig. 2). This area very closely matches the same area that was proposed for preservation in situ for the permitted 2017 scheme (the sole difference being the area for further investigation described above).

3.7 The approach to protecting these remains during construction will be set out in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP or equivalent document). Furthermore, as with the further investigations discussed above, this commitment to i) preservation in situ; ii) informing the detailed design and construction methodologies; and iii) the protective / monitoring measures during construction, can be a standard condition of the consented scheme.

3.8 The means by which preservation in situ can be achieved is explained in further detail in the Hamill Davis report (2017) and this remains valid and relevant now. As described above, the layout of the scheme is only indicative at this stage, therefore, it would be more appropriate for the detail required for the preservation in-situ strategy to be drafted as a standard condition of the consented application; providing for an update of the Hamill Davis report (2017). As the detailed design for the scheme begins to take shape, post-consent, the specific components of the construction process can be developed and agreed in consultation with OCCPA, on behalf of CDC.

3.9 For the avoidance of doubt, the works proposed in the locations of the slip road and the embankment is of nature that will not require construction work to a depth that could disturb buried archaeological remains (i.e. they will be ‘cosmetic enhancements’ such as vegetation clearance, improvements to pavements etc...). As such, this area of the site is identified on Fig. 2 as ‘preservation in situ / no intrusive work’.

**Archaeological Excavation, Recording and Publication**

3.10 A written scheme of investigation (WSI or method statement) will be drafted in accordance with the *Brief* referred to above (in Section 1), industry standards and best practice. This will be approved by OCCPA, on behalf of CDC, prior to any construction work commencing on site.

3.11 This WSI will detail the two principal components of the archaeological excavation and recording strategy "open area strip" and "archaeological watching brief" (see Fig. 2 for the location of these proposals). The WSI will also discuss, in outline, the potential avenues for dissemination and publication of the findings.

**In summary**

3.12 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 the limited harm that would come from the loss of archaeological remains should be assessed in the planning balance against the public benefits. Furthermore, standard conditions can be attached to the consented scheme to secure an appropriate and proportionate programme of mitigation.

## 4. REFERENCES

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A41 / Oxford Road

A41 / Oxford Road

Entrance Boulevard

Wendlebury Road

Unit 1
3 Storey
Floor Area: 37,038 sq ft

Unit 2
3 Storey
Floor Area: 37,038 sq ft

Unit 3
3 Storey
Floor Area: 38,[illegible] sq ft

Unit 4
3 Storey
Floor Area: 49,050 sq ft

503 No. Car Parking Spaces

65.6m

221000

Pond

Lakeside Bungalow

Lakeside House

tanks

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 23

N

**Legend**

- Site Boundary/Bicester Gateway Boundary
- Bicester Catalyst Boundary

**Cotswold Archaeology Trial Trenching (CA2016 B and 2019)**

- Deposit/fill
- Intervention
- Field drain
- Modern
- Structure
- Treethrow
- Cut feature
- Limit of excavation top

**2020 Masterplan**

- Indicative Building Locations 2020

0 50m



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PROJECT TITLE

Bicester Gateway, Bicester
Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE

**Permitted Masterplan 2017 (16/02586/OUT) and Indicative Building Locations 2020**

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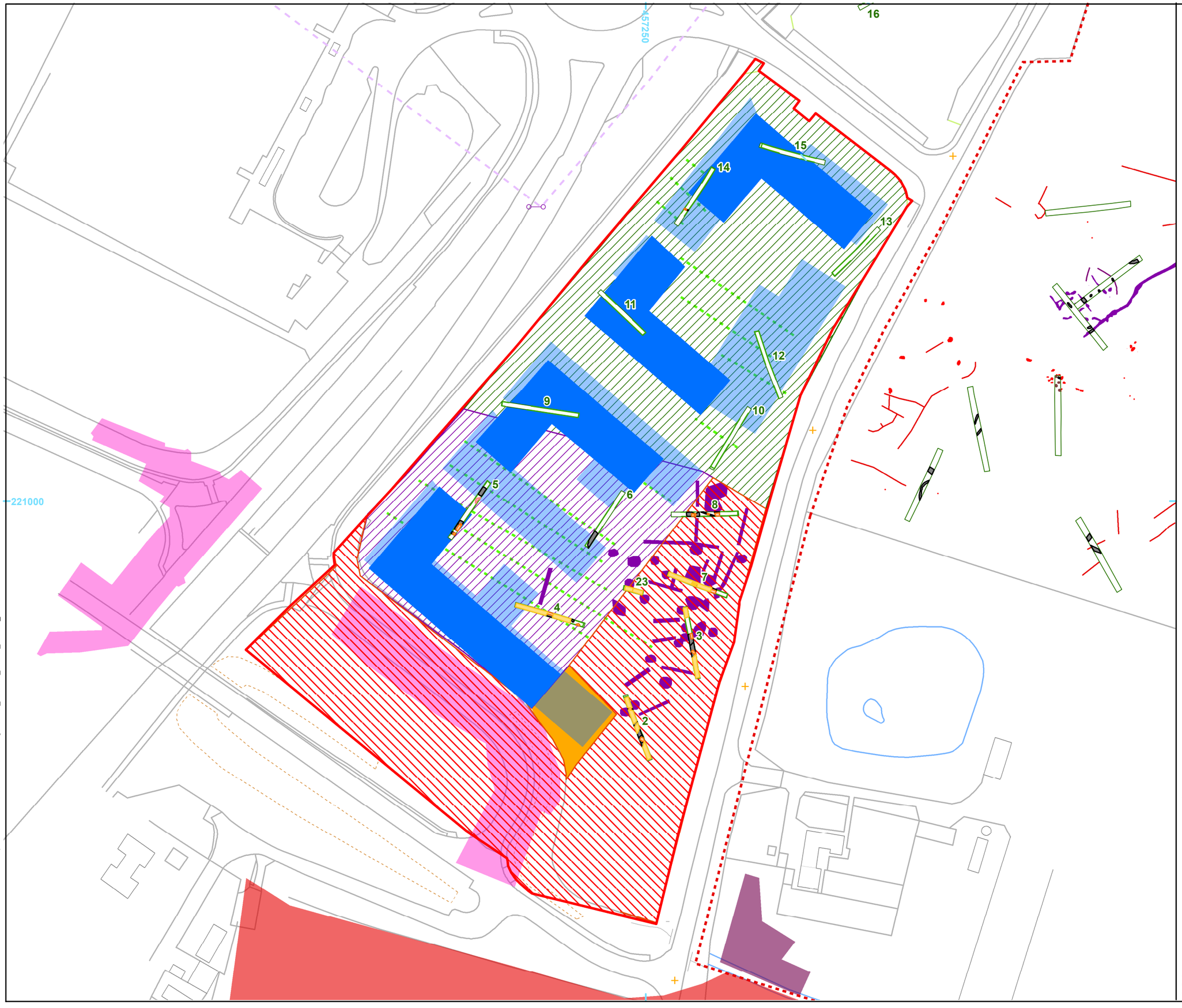


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**Legend**

- Site Boundary/Bicester Gateway Boundary
- Bicester Catalyst Boundary
- Scheduled Monument 1006365 (northern edge only)

**Geophysical Survey (PCG 2016 and AS 2018)**

- Archaeology
- Uncertain
- Ridge and Furrow

**Cotswold Archaeology Trial Trenching (CA2016 B and 2019)**

- Deposit/fill
- CA excavated
- Field drain
- Modern
- Structure
- Treethrow
- Cut feature
- Limit of excavation top

**Previous Archaeological Works (Pre 2015)**

- Booth et al. 2001
- Rahtz et al. 1983

**Proposed Archaeological Mitigation Plan**

- Indicative Building Locations (permitted) 2017
- Indicative Building Locations 2020
- Preservation in-situ / no intrusive works
- Open Area Strip
- Watching Brief Area
- Potentially preservation in-situ; subject to further investigation

0 50m



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*PROJECT TITLE*

Bicester Gateway, Bicester
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*FIGURE TITLE*

**Proposed Archaeological Mitigation Plan**

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