

# Interim Statement for an Archaeological Evaluation at land south of Banbury Rise, Banbury, Oxfordshire

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## Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at land south of Banbury Rise, Banbury, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 43423 40229). It was commissioned by Cathy Patrick of Orion Heritage on behalf of Bloor Homes Ltd (Western).

The evaluation is being undertaken in support of an outline planning application for residential development of the site. One hundred trenches were excavated across two fields, comprising a 4% sample to target geophysical anomalies and to test geophysically 'blank' areas. Trenches 43, 44, 50 and 51 were all moved to avoid a service, and due to the presence of a badger exclusion zone, Trench 99 was moved and Trench 100 was relocated to test an anomaly elsewhere.

## Interim Results

The excavation of these trenches broadly confirmed the results of the geophysical survey. The results in the northern field showed a series of larger ditches, three possible ring gully features, and three long pit alignments. Furrows were also identified across the northern field, although they were not as widespread as the geophysical anomalies suggested. This can be explained by their shallow nature, as it is likely that the geophysics has recorded some furrows that were only present in the subsoil. The geophysical capture of blank areas in the northern field was also fairly accurate, with only a handful of features found in blank areas, in particular in the north-west corner of the field. Very few finds were recovered from features excavated in the northern field. The only spot date obtained from pottery in the northern field was for the large ditch in Trench 37, which was dated to the mid-Iron Age.

In the southern field the geophysical anomalies were also found to be accurate. The main focus of the activity is found in the south-east corner of the southern field, consisting of a wide, curvilinear ditch enclosing smaller ditched features and a few distinct pit clusters. The large curvilinear ditch in the northern field appears to continue down the west side of the southern field, and encloses a smaller amount of archaeology, including a small, curving pit alignment and a number of smaller linear features. Furrows were identified on two distinct alignments in the southern field, with only one of these alignments clearly represented on the geophysical survey. As in the northern field the furrows identified in the trenches were not as extensive as the geophysical survey suggested.

Pottery sherds were recovered from a number of features in the south-east corner of the field and dated almost exclusively to the Middle Iron Age. One piece of Bronze Age pottery, and a sherd of Roman date were recovered from a slot in Trench 94 excavated through a linear feature within the larger enclosure. A few sherds of Roman pottery were also found in features in Trench 76. A small assemblage of struck flint was recovered from features and as surface finds across the southern field. The majority of these were debitage or flakes, and the only dateable tools were a thumbnail scraper and a heavily patinated borer, both likely of

Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date, and a bladelet core of probable Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date. These finds probably relate to episodes of seasonal activity within this landscape during the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods.

Interpretation of the main focus of activity in the south-east part of the site is restricted by the lack of obvious evidence for domestic occupation within the area enclosed by the curvilinear ditch. Here clusters of pits probably reflect either disposal or storage functions whilst lesser ditches and small curvilinear features may represent internal divisions. It is however evident that this represents only a small part of a large Middle Iron Age enclosure and domestic features may well lie to the south and east beyond the investigated area. In the northern field the pit alignments are typical of such features and can probably be interpreted as a form of landscape boundary. They are likely to date from the later Bronze Age to late Iron Age period.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved at this stage. Conditions were suitable in all of the trenches to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features. It is considered that the nature, density and distribution of archaeological features provides an accurate characterisation of the site. A full report will be completed in due course.





