

LNT Care Home – Graven Hill

Technical Note 1: Archaeological Advice Note

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This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with Waterman Group’s IMS (BS EN ISO 9001: 2015, BS EN ISO 14001: 2015 and BS EN ISO 45001:2018)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Waterman Group, in consultation with Marrons, were commissioned by LNT Care Developments to compile an Archaeological Advice Note to accompany an application for planning permission for the proposed Graven Hill Care Home within the area of the former Rodney House, Bicester, which has been demolished centred on National Grid Reference SP 58882 21246, henceforth referred to as “the Site” (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Site Location

- 1.2. This assessment summaries the archaeological and historical background of the Site and the previous archaeological interventions which have been undertaken within it.

2. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.1. A detailed Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological excavation of the Site was prepared in 2021. The site was previously put forward to be developed as The proposed Bicester Health and Wellbeing Hub (application ref. 21/01454/F). The application was taken to planning committee on 14th July 2022 and was subsequently approved, subject to the S106 signing. The following is a summary of the background section of the WSI.

Prehistoric

- 2.2. No evidence of Early Prehistoric (Palaeolithic – neolithic) activity is recorded within the vicinity of the Site, with Bronze Age activity principally represented by funerary monuments, such as possible round barrows to the northwest of the Site.
- 2.3. Iron Age activity is more widely recoded within the Graven Hill area, including settlement sites at Chesterton Lane and Bicester Fields Farm. Furthermore, cropmark evidence is suggestive of a pre-Roman settlement at Alchester.
- 2.4. There are no recorded Prehistoric remains within the Site.

Roman

- 2.5. The principal settlement site of Roman date within the area is the town of Alchester, a Scheduled Monument (NHLE Ref 1006365) located approximately 1.3km southwest of the Site. Together with the associated Roman roads, one of which passes approximately 500m south of the Site, Alchester defines the Roman settlement pattern in the immediate surrounds of wider Graven Hill.
- 2.6. There is a significant body of evidence of Roman occupation documented in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) in the form of numerous artefacts, many of which have been from within and around Alchester or along the known routes of Roman roads.

Medieval and Post-Medieval

- 2.7. The Roman town at Alchester was abandoned, around the 5th century AD, and Bicester appears to have been established as a Saxon settlement in the 6th century and was named as Burencestre in the Domesday Survey of 1086.
- 2.8. In addition to the surviving settlements of medieval origin, there was also a medieval settlement at Wretchwick, approximately 500m east of the Site. Wretchwick, a Scheduled Monument (NHLE Ref 1015549), was in the possession of Bicester Priory, before being depopulated by the priory to make way for sheep grazing.

19th And 20th Century

- 2.9. Graven Hill is shown in detail on a series of OS Maps dating from 1880 onwards. In 1880, it is shown comprising a series of enclosed fields arranged around Graven Hill Wood. A single farmstead was present within the wider Graven Hill Site boundary in 1880.

- 2.10. The major development of the 20th century, which has shaped the current form of Graven Hill and the Site, was the establishment of the Central Ordnance Depot in 1941. The depot spread over a wide area, occupying a number of sites from Graven Hill in the north to Arncoth and Piddington in the south, collectively known as MOD Bicester.
- 2.11. MOD Bicester continued to operate as a Central Ordnance Depot in the post-war period, though the military workforce was gradually replaced by an increasing number of civilian workers.
- 2.12. The temporary hutted accommodation camps were gradually removed and in 1956 new barracks were completed to the west of Graven Hill Wood on the current St David's Barracks site.
- 2.13. All accommodation huts had been removed by 1989.

Previous Archaeological Interventions

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY EXCAVATION SOUTH OF THE SITE

- 2.14. In preparation for pond excavations to the south of the Site, an archaeological excavation was undertaken which included a small proportion of the Site's most south-eastern corner was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology in 2020.
- 2.15. Late Iron Age/Roman activity was identified, including pits and/or postholes within the approximate centre of the excavation area, and a ditch containing pottery.
- 2.16. Post-medieval evidence was also recovered in the form of 2 wall foundations, which enclosed an area 3.6m wide and at last 5.1m long, a metallised surface and a trampled floor. The walls followed the alignment of the Medieval field system.
- 2.17. In addition to the above, 8 undated pits and 3 undated postholes were also found. These were tentatively dated to the late Iron Age/Early Roman to Medieval period based on the presence of similar pits of such date.

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES EXCAVATION WITHIN THE SITE

- 2.18. John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological excavation at the Site in 2022.
- 2.19. The majority of the features uncovered during the investigations dated to the late Post-Medieval to Modern periods.
- 2.20. Modern deposits and structures such as car parks, pavements, and floorings truncated large portions of the site, especially in the eastern portion of the excavation area.
- 2.21. The northeastern corner of the site comprised disturbed natural and demolition rubble, where the previous Rodney House stood.
- 2.22. There is a high likelihood of the Site having undergone multiple phases of truncation in order to level the area prior to the construction of Rodney House, associated structures, and services.
- 2.23. The features recorded within the Site were interpreted as being associated with the Post-Medieval and Modern structures on the site or forming rubbish dumps.
- 2.24. Late post-medieval to modern material was recovered from the majority of the features; one small pit yielded no finds, and therefore remained undated.
- 2.25. No evidence of the features present in the Oxford Archaeology excavation to the south were recorded. Due to the shallow nature of the features observed to the south, it is highly likely that the Post-Medieval and Modern levelling had removed any evidence of these features.

3. Conclusion

Conclusions

- 3.1. Previous archaeological excavation of the Site has demonstrated that any Prehistoric, Roman or Medieval features have been entirely truncated by later Post-Medieval and Modern levelling of the Site.
- 3.2. The Post-Medieval and Modern remains observed, have been fully recorded and as such preserved by record.
- 3.3. It is considered that no further archaeological works are required within the Site prior to the construction of the proposed development.