

530m to the south-east of the Site, a Roman coin hoard was discovered in 2000, consisting of 63 silver and 26 copper alloy coins of 1-2nd-century date, which had been deposited in the base of a greyware bowl or flagon. The date of deposition is estimated to be AD 138.

Specific evidence relating to the Site from Excavations in the extramural settlement of Roman Alchester

- 4.27 Excavations in the northern extramural settlement of Roman Alchester were undertaken in 1991 by Oxford Archaeology, in advance of road construction on the A421 (Oxford Road), and completed in 1994 (Fig. 4, **11**, **11a-11c**: Oxford Archaeology 2002). Located to the west of the Site, evidence for activity of the 1-2nd century date was characterised by ditches on alignments relating to Akeman Street, while a complex system of ditched plots developed later, on each side of the lane running parallel to, and north of, Akeman Street. South of the lane, the earliest structures dated to the mid-2nd century. North of the lane, plots contained Roman structures of various plan and construction, and the character of this settlement appeared to be of predominantly agricultural. Settlement and agricultural activity appeared to have continued into the post-Roman period. A late Roman cemetery was recorded, alongside a large pottery assemblage, with numerous other finds.
- 4.28 Of key consideration in this assessment are Excavation Sites B, C and D, located to the west of the Site (Fig. 4, **11b**). Notable differences between these sites included the degree of preservation of deposits. Much of Site B (immediately adjacent to the south-western corner of the proposed development site) was associated with deposits ranging in depth from c. 0.3m to 0.6m, while Site C and D contained limited significant stratigraphy, a result of intensive arable agricultural practices. The excavators of Site B noted that, due to its location, i.e. detached from larger fields to the west, it had not been subject to intensive later cultivation, and that, consequently, ridge and furrow survived in earthwork form within the triangular field (Fig. **6-8**). Bot
- 4.29 Evidence of activity of prehistoric date, notably of the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, comprised finds of redeposited flint and Beaker pottery. In Site C, a roundhouse was associated with two or three phases of Iron Age ditched enclosures, while in Site B, evidence comprised a ditched boundary defining the eastern extent of Iron Age activity, including a roundhouse enclosed by a gully, and additional gully features. Early Roman evidence comprised a large ditch cutting the former Iron Age settlement, which was aligned west-north-west/east-south-east,

and which established an basis for the layout of subsequent field boundaries that was maintained through this period. Other Roman features recorded during these investigations included structural evidence, with a mix of stone and timber buildings, enclosures, pits, hearths, post holes, trackways, cobbled surfaces, and wells, together with cremations and an inhumation cemetery in Site C. Anglo-Saxon and residual Beaker material were also recorded during these investigations. Further medieval evidence comprises traces of ridge and furrow cultivation, which survived in earthwork form in Site B, and post-medieval evidence included ceramic field drains, which followed the alignment of former ridge and furrow earthworks (Oxford Archaeology 2002).

- 4.30 At Site D, evidence of late Iron Age and early Roman activity comprised gullies, enclosures and postholes, with finds including pottery, charcoal and a limited amount of animal bone. The evidence did not suggest intensive domestic activity. The paucity of material recorded at Site D has been interpreted as resulting from either the limited area exposed by the excavation, or from the peripheral location of Site D on the margins of Roman settlement at Alchester (Oxford Archaeology 2002).
- 4.31 As part of the investigations, a sewer pipe was re-routed between the Wendlebury Lane and Chesterton Lane junction, and the Faccenda Chicken Farm. Within the c. 80m trench excavated, deposits towards Faccenda Chicken Farm comprised a sequence consisting of modern road surface and associated hardcore alongside an underlying buff sandy clay, at a depth of c. 0.6m to 0.75m in depth. Beneath these layers, an approximate depth of 1.3m of archaeological deposits was recorded (including the fills and cuts of features). The two northern sections of the trench had a total depth of 1.2m, including the modern road make up, and cut features were identified within Sections 3 and 4, to the south. An interpretation of this sequence suggested that, as the trench lay adjacent to the suggested edge of the Alchester to Towcester Roman Road (Fig. 4, **14**), these linear features may have related to the road and associated roadside structures, rather than to the broad scheme of alignments identified in Sites B and C. An edge-set of stones recorded during the investigation were suggested to represent a drain, and overlying stone layers within the sequence were interpreted as a phase of the Alchester-Towcester road. A building, located adjacent to the road, was also identified from a concentration of stone rubble in the sequence (Oxford Archaeology Unit 2002).

Specific evidence relating to the Site from the Wendlebury Road, Bicester Phase 2 excavations

- 4.32 An evaluation at Wendlebury Road Phase 2 was undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) in November 2010, prior to the construction of a new roundabout and slip road running off the A41 (Oxford Road) in the west, to Wendlebury Road in the east. The excavation comprised a single 3.5m long trench, aligned west, north-west/east, south-east. The western end of the trench was 1.13m deep (Fig. 4, **17**: Lewis, 2010). The first phase of evaluation on the line at Wendlebury Road in July 2010, 300m to the north, did not locate any Roman deposits.
- 4.33 The stratigraphy of the trench consisted of a modern road surface overlying made ground containing angular limestone fragments and concrete, 0.5m thick. Beneath this, a compact, light-brown, sandy clay, containing occasional limestone inclusions, was situated above a compact, brown sandy clay, with occasional charcoal and limestone inclusions. Roman pottery, iron objects, glass and animal bone were recorded in this layer, which in turn overlay a compact, irregular surface of limestone of approximately 0.05m in thickness. The limestone surface extended beyond the edges of the excavated area to the north and south, and within the joints between the stones both Roman pottery and iron objects were recorded. Natural geology was not observed within the trench (Lewis 2010).
- 4.34 The evaluation produced pottery dating from the 3rd to 4th centuries, a small quantity of animal bone, four iron objects, four pieces of ceramic building material and one single sherd of glass, which all came from a soil deposit which had accumulated above the cobbled limestone surface. This surface was located along the suggested route of the Roman road, and the remains recorded in this investigation represent this. The finds appeared to represent domestic refuse, which would have been widely spread across this zone, which was considered to lie within the hinterland of the Alchester settlement (Lewis 2010).

Specific evidence relating to the Site from Faccenda Chicken Farm excavation

- 4.35 Excavations at the Faccenda Chicken Farm were carried out in 1983 by Oxford University Department for External Studies (Fig. 4, **19**: Foreman and Rahtz n.d.).
- 4.36 The earliest activity recorded on the Site dated to the Roman period, and was associated with the digging of rubbish pits, and of straight, parallel ditches. Aligned east to west, with a gentle fall suggesting a drainage function, the fill of the ditches

was consistent with waterlain material. The horse, sheep, and cattle bone recorded in the ditch, is likely to have derived from a nearby settlement. Pottery recorded during the excavation dated to the 1st to 2nd centuries AD, and other finds included metalwork, glass and quern fragments.

- 4.37 Analysis of the waterlogged samples suggested that the settlement was established on wet ground at Faccenda, between the 1st to 2nd centuries AD. A rich assemblage of plant remains indicated that the settlement had an environment of wet grassland and disturbed ground, with some scrub and hedges present and evidence of crop-processing on the site was recorded. The character of the site suggested short-lived occupation, and the principal period of activity at Faccenda, in the mid-2nd century, falls between the earliest ditches of the Roman Town, and the formalisation of the town defences in the early 3rd century AD. 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.

Specific evidence relating to the Site from the RCHME level 3 aerial photographic interpretation project

- 4.38 The Alchester Roman Town aerial photographic interpretation project was undertaken in 1996, with the aim of interpreting and transcribing, in digital form, all relevant archaeological information contained in aerial photographs of the Roman town and its environs, and with the objective of recording the details of the town plan and setting Alchester within its Roman-period landscape context (Fig 4. 20: Stoertz, 1998).
- 4.39 The project recorded cropmark evidence of the intramural area of the town, and within the wider landscape. This included areas of ridge and furrow cultivation to the south, and traces of former buildings were mapped to the north. The project also recorded the Iron Age banjo enclosure (Fig. 2, 2), and its associated three hut circles and sinuous ditches, which represent an earlier phase of activity and occupation.
- 4.40 A series of regular, rectilinear ditched enclosures to the north, east and south of Alchester Roman Town closely reflect the alignment of the town defences and internal streets, and are therefore likely to be associated with the extra-mural settlement and economic activity of the town. Recorded within the Site itself are a series of ditches within the north-eastern corner of its central portion. Aligned north-east/south-west and north-west/south-east, and thus conflicting with the highly

regular, orthogonal Roman system of land division to the south, these features are considered unlikely to be of Roman date, although this cannot be confirmed without archaeological investigation (Fig. 4, **20**; Figure 6-8).

Early medieval (AD410 – AD 1066) and medieval (AD 1066 – 1539)

- 4.41 No early medieval or medieval activity is recorded within the Site.
- 4.42 Evidence of early medieval activity within the wider environs of the Site comprises archaeological deposits located approximately 690m north-east of the Site, a reputed Anglo-Saxon battle site, located approximately 800m to the south-east, and a findspot of an Anglo-Saxon spearhead found in near Gravenhill Wood, located approximately 860m to the south-east (Fig. 5, **33** and **35**). Recorded on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map, the reputed Anglo-Saxon battle site is recorded as the ‘site of battle between the Danes and Saxons AD 871’ (OHER 2016).
- 4.43 The medieval parish of Bicester, held by Robert D’Oilly during the Norman period, covered a large area, and encompassed Stratton Audley and the hamlets of King’s End, Bignell and Wretchwick. The Bicester parish was first reduced in size in 1454, when Stratton Audley became a separate parish, and King’s End, although administered as a separate township, was divided from Bicester Market End only by the Bure Brook. The name King’s End is thought to have originated around 1316, and is suggested to have been named in the 11th century, when Kirtlington, of which it was a member, was a royal manor. Although Bicester is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, the earliest account of King’s End comes from the record for the Prioress of Markyate, who held a small manor, with eleven villeins holding six virgates between them (Victoria County History 1959; Craig 2009).
- 4.44 Originally part of Bignell, and thus of Kirtlington, it is not known from whom, or when, the Bedfordshire nunnery of Markyate Priory obtained their lands in Bignell. However, it has been suggested that the land was acquired soon after its foundations in c. 1145. Bicester House, formerly known as Burcester Hall, is located on the site of the former manor-house of the nuns of Markyate. The nuns are suggested to have leased their estate in 1530, which in 1584 was purchased with the house by John Coker.
- 4.45 In 1291 Markyate Priory held an estate valued at £2 16s 10d a year, and although Bignell near Chesterton has been identified as King’s End, the name Bignell Field

and King's End Field are suggested to have used alternatively during the Middle Ages for the common field of the two townships (Victoria County History 1959).

- 4.46 Further evidence of medieval activity within the environs of the Site includes evidence of agricultural activity and settlement in the form of miscellaneous findspots, including tokens, pottery and coins, and recorded features such as ditches, pits and postholes, ridge and furrow earthworks, trackways and quarries located immediately to the west of the Site, c. 800m to the north, c. 970m to the north-east, c. 310m and 900m to the east, c. 760m to the south-west and 1km to the west, and c. 50m, 70m and 740 to the north-west (Fig. 5, **5**, **5e**, **8**, **11**, **11b-11c**, **32**, **34**, **36** and **37**).

Post-medieval (AD 1539 – 1800) and modern (AD 1801 - present)

- 4.47 Post-medieval evidence within the study area largely comprises evidence of agricultural activity and quarrying immediately to the west of the Site, and c. 740m to the north-west (Fig. 5, **5e** and **11b**).
- 4.48 Further evidence of post-medieval activity comprises finds of pottery and demolition material associated with farm buildings, boundary ditches, and demolition material recorded approximately c. 800m to the north, and 530m to the north-east, of the Site (Fig. 5, **32** and **39**).
- 4.49 Modern activity within the study area comprises land drains and service trenches, located immediately to the west of the Site, c. 500m and 530m to the north-east 530m to the north-east, and c. 360m south-west of the Site (Fig. 5, **9**, **11a-11c**, **39**).
- 4.50 The Buckinghamshire Railway, located approximately 140m east of the Site, was established through the merging of two companies proposing lines from Bletchley to Banbury, and Aylesbury to Oxford (Fig. 5). The Bletchley-Banbury section opened in 1850, and the Oxford-Verney Junction on the Bletchley-Banbury line opened a year later. The Banbury line remained a branch-line throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, while the Oxford Line developed into a major cross-county link, until its closure to passengers in 1968. The Banbury line closed to passengers in 1961, although a truncated spur to Buckingham remained open for a further three years. The use of Banbury line for goods traffic ceased in 1963, while the Oxford section remains fully operational (OHER 2016).
- 4.51 Britain's largest military railway system, the Bicester Military Railway, is located approximately 200m to the east of the Site (Fig. 5), and functions as the primary

mode of transport at the Central Ordnance Depot, Bicester. Surveyed prior to construction in August 1942, six passenger platforms were built around the Graven Hill depot, although all except the Graven Hill platform have since been demolished.

- 4.52 Graven Hill Depot is located approximately 900m to the east of the Site (Fig. 5). The site of an ordnance depot during the Second World War, the depot consists of a complex of sites clustered around Graven Hill and Arncott Hill, to the south-east of Bicester. Completed in 1943, the depot covered an area of approximately 12sqm, with nearly 50m of railway track. The depot was used as the main supply base for British Army operations during the Second World War, and also became an important supply base for United States forces. The site has continued to function as a supply depot, although it has undergone a number of more recent changes, with some areas falling out of operational use. A number of the former storage hangars and original facilities survive.

Development within the Site

- 4.53 During the post-medieval period, the Site is likely to have comprised agricultural farmland. An historic map regression exercise has enabled a reconstruction of historical developments within the Site, from the early modern period to the present day.

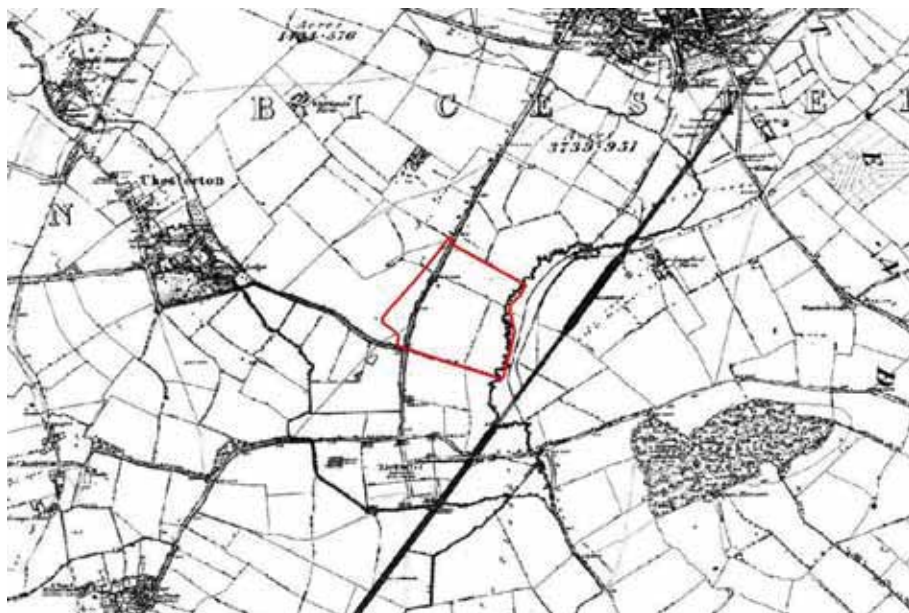


Photograph 6: Extract from the 1793 Enclosure Map

- 4.54 The earliest cartographic evidence consulted for this assessment was Thomas Jefferies' Map of Oxfordshire of 1767 (not reproduced), and the Davis Map of Oxfordshire 1773 (not reproduced). The maps illustrate a general view of Bicester,

but offer no detailed depiction of the Site. The 1793 Enclosure Map for King's End, and the Bryant Map of Oxfordshire of 1824, were also consulted. The maps indicate that, during the late 18th century, the Site and its surroundings formed part of King's End Inclosure and King's End Mead, and that the former Roman road from Alchester to Towcester ran through the western margins of the Site (Photograph 6). However, these maps offer no detailed depiction of the Site itself, and there are no Tithe or Estate maps covering Bicester.

- 4.55 During the late 19th century, the Site comprised three agricultural fields bordered on the east by a tributary of the River Ray, and on the west by the line of the Roman Road (Photograph 7). The wider environs of the Site comprised agricultural land, with the site of Alchester Roman Town recorded to the south-west. The Oxford and Bletchley Branch Railway, now known as Oxford to Bicester Railway Line, is recorded on Ordnance Survey mapping from 1875 onwards.



Photograph 7: Extract from the 1885 Ordnance Survey Map

- 4.56 Fieldsapes within the Site were subject to only limited alterations during the 20th century, as depicted on the 1900 and 1922 Ordnance Survey map (not reproduced). By 1952, the A41 (Oxford Road) was constructed, and Phase 1, part of the Site between Wendlebury Road (the former line of the Roman Road) and the A41, was established. As indicated on the 1967 Ordnance Survey map, the site of an Iron Age/Romano-British settlement was recorded within the south-western corner of the Site, and a drain and pond were present along the southern boundary. Within the wider environs on the Site, the Ordnance Depot at Graven Hill to the

west was constructed by 1967, with agricultural land remaining to the south and south-west.

- 4.57 By the late 20th century, the chicken farm along the southern boundary of the Site, along with Bicester Village to the north and the sewage works to the north-east, had all been established. Within the wider landscape, Bicester to the north, Chesterton to the east and Wendlebury to the south-west were subject to rapid expansion, with agricultural land remaining to the south, south-west and north-west of the Site.
- 4.58 The current layout of the Site appears to have been established by 1988, with all of the boundaries established, and the public footpath running through the eastern margins of the Site, and Wendlebury Road running to the west. Modern activity within the Site during the late 20th and 21st centuries has included the construction of a slip road running east to west across Phase 1, and the construction of the chicken farm along the southern boundary of Phase 2. No evidence of more recent activity was noted within the Site.

Aerial Photographs

- 4.59 Undated evidence within the study area largely comprises evidence of agricultural activity within the landscape. Recorded on mid-20th-century aerial photographs (RAF/106G/UK/620 10th August 1945; RAF/541/340 26th July 1949; and RAF/540/14001st September 1954) are a number of buildings which appear to be associated with agricultural activity, and are visible within the central portion of the Site. In 1945, two buildings were present along the northern boundary of the central portion of the Site, and by 1949, three buildings are apparent along the western boundary of the central area. By 1954, two buildings remain along the western boundary, with a third building located within the northern corner of the central area of the Site. These buildings were not recorded on subsequent aerial photographs, or on Ordnance Survey maps.
- 4.60 The chicken farm along the southern boundary of the Site is recorded on aerial photographs from c. 1991 onwards, and is accompanied by a pond to the east and west, as illustrated on Figure 6-8. The pond to the east of the chicken farm was not visible during the site visit, suggesting that it had been subject to recent infilling.
- 4.61 Recorded from mid to late 20th century aerial photography (26th July 1949; 12th February 1952; 29 April 1966; 5th July 1975; 19th September 1991; 19th February 1993; 28th June 1994; 15th June 1996; 19th February 2005; and 20th July 2005) a

series of dark cropmarks are present within the Site (Fig. 6-8). These run across Phase 1, aligned north-west/south-east, and are visible in the northern corner of Phase 2. These suggest the remains of ridge and furrow cultivation, resulting in a pattern of earthwork ridges and troughs created by a system of strip-ploughing during the medieval period.

- 4.62 A number of cropmarks visible on the aerial photographs, within the central portion of the Site, appear to represent earlier activity, as they do not conform to the alignment of the modern field pattern. Prominent amongst these is a reasonably large, rectilinear enclosure within the central portion of the Site, which is aligned west/east. This appears to be associated with a series of smaller enclosures aligned north/south, which is typical of a late Romano-British or medieval nucleated settlement. A number of other linear features crossing the Site on a north/south alignment are also not aligned with the modern field system, and could represent former trackways. The enclosure and ditches within the central portion of the Site are visible on the Environment Agency Lidar coverage of this area, and have been recorded as part of the part of the RCHME Alchester aerial photography interpretation project. As mentioned above, it is our current understanding that these ditches are probably not of Roman date, although this assumption has yet to be determined by archaeological investigation (Fig. 6-8).



Photograph 8: View towards the south-east of Phase 2 of the Site, from the north-west

- 4.63 Analysis of the Environment's Agency Lidar data has recorded the presence of further earthwork features within both Phase 1 and Phase the Site, including a

linear feature which is aligned north-east to south-west within the north-western corner of Phase 2, and which may represent a palaeochannel, the remnant of an inactive stream channel that has been subject to infilling or burial by younger overlying sediment. The palaeochannel was clearly visible during the site visit (Photograph 8).

Undated

- 4.64 Within the study area, there are a number of undated finds and features which have been recorded during archaeological investigations, including undated pits and postholes, including two possible hearths located approximately 110m to the west of the Site (Fig. 5, **13**: Oxford Archaeology, 2013), and several small, burnt deposits located approximately 500m to the north-east (Fig. 5, **9**: Network Archaeology 2007). Despite the lack of dating evidence, these burnt deposits were sealed beneath post-medieval soil, thus suggesting a relatively early date.
- 4.65 Within the wider environs of the Site, a series of cropmarks, suggesting possible ring ditches and/or curvilinear ditches, are located approximately 410m and 840m to the north of the Site, 1km to the north-east and 500m to the north-west (Fig. 5: Appendix A).
- 4.66 Within the south-western corner of the central portion of the Site, a linear earthwork, orientated north/south, may possibly represent the line of the Alchester-Towcester Road, with the modern roadway diverted slightly to the west (Fig. 5: OHER 2016). This earthwork has not been recorded by the RCHME aerial photographic interpretation project (1990). A spread of stone recorded to the east of the modern bridge across the A41 (Oxford Road) may represent a former ford or a road crossing over the brook, although excavations at Faccenda Farm (1983) did not record any evidence of the road in this area. However, excavations at Wendlebury Road, Bicester: Phase 2 excavation (2010), and excavations within the extramural settlement of the Roman Town (Site B: 1991) recorded evidence of this road to the west and south-west of the Site (Fig. 4, **11b**, **17**, **19**). There is a possibility that this linear earthwork represents a Roman ditch, which was either originally located adjacent to the Roman road, or was otherwise utilised for agricultural purposes.
- 4.67 During investigations at the Proposed Community Hospital at Bicester (2002), located approximately 910m to the north, a number of undated finds and features included evidence of post-holes and post-built structures, which were suggested to be of probable Roman date (Fig. 5, **38**: Oxford Archaeology 2002).

- 4.68 During a watching brief at Whitelands Farm (2010), located approximately 530m to the north-east of the Site, no dateable evidence was recovered during a pipe trench excavation (Fig. 5, **39**: John Moore Heritage Services 2010). However, the white loam and brown silt-sand deposits recorded corresponded closely to those deposits sealing Roman features which were recorded during evaluations at Bicester Office Park (2007) (Fig. 3, **9**: Network Archaeology 2007; John Moore Heritage Services 2010).
- 4.69 During trial trenching on land off London Road (2007), located approximately 1km to the north-east of the Site, two palaeochannels, and three phases of alluviation, separated two distinct phases of archaeological deposits (Fig. 5, **40**: John Moore Heritage Services 2007). A large number of undated pits, ditches and postholes were recorded, which were suggested to be contemporary with the nearby Roman remains at Oxford Road (Fig. 4, **7**: Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit 1993 and 1995).



5. SETTINGS ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This section assesses the potential impact of the proposed development on the significance of designated heritage assets, through the alteration of their setting. The methodology used for this assessment was based on the guidance provided in Historic England's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2015b), which provides guidance on setting and development management, including assessment of the implications of the development proposals for the setting, and significance, of designated heritage assets. A stepped approach is recommended for the assessment and this methodology is described in more detail in Sections 2.14 - 2.19, above.
- 5.2 An initial scoping process, carried out as part of Step 1 of the setting assessment methodology, utilised readily-available information, such as modern mapping, terrain mapping and aerial photography, to establish whether any particular heritage asset could be affected by the proposed development through an alteration to its setting. Designated heritage assets within a 500m radius of the Site were considered for a settings assessment. The process took into account the nature of the prevailing topography, distance between the Site and the asset, the presence of intervening vegetation (woods, tree belts, hedgerows etc.), built form screening, the primary aspect and experience of the heritage assets themselves, and the nature of the proposed development.
- 5.3 The exercise concluded that there was no inter-visibility between the Site and the majority of the designated heritage assets located within the Site's wider environs, including four Grade II Listed Buildings (**C-D**) within the surrounding rural landscape (Appendix A). Located at a sufficient distance from the Site to suggest they have no historical or functional relationship with it, these assets are also effectively screened by existing intervening built form, modern transport infrastructure (A41) and mature vegetation. As the Site is not considered to form part of the historical setting of these designated heritage assets, and the proposed development would not result in harm to their setting and significance, they were excluded from further assessment. The lack of inter-visibility, and of any other perceived relationship, was confirmed during the Site visit.
- 5.4 Chesterton Conservation Area lies approximately 590m to the west of the Site, and includes four Grade II Listed Buildings (Fig. 2, **E**) (Appendix A). Due to the effects of distance, and the presence of intervening built form, modern transport infrastructure

(A41) and mature vegetation, these buildings and the Chesterton Conservation Area are effectively screened from the proposed development Site. On this basis, and in the absence of any historical or function relationship with the Site, it has been determined that the proposal would not result in harm to the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area, nor alter the setting of any constituent Listed Buildings, or affect any aspects of their significance, which are principally derived from the historic and architectural interest of their physical form.

- 5.5 Two designated heritage assets, comprising Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town (**A**) and the Grade II Listed Langford Park Farmhouse (**B**), were considered for further detailed assessment, in order to establish whether the proposed development has the potential to change the settings of these assets and therefore affect their significance.

Alchester Roman Site (A)

- 5.6 The Scheduled Monument, comprising the Roman Site of Alchester is adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site (Fig. 2, **A**). Although Phase 1 is separated from the defined boundaries of the Scheduled Monument by a narrow parcel of land, including the slip road connecting the A41 (Oxford Road) in the west, to Wendlebury Road in the east, evidence of extramural settlement associated with Alchester has been recorded within this area (Oxford Archaeology 2002). The defended area of Alchester Roman Town occupies an area of approximately 10.5ha, and the basic circuit of the town defences are largely marked by existing field boundaries and the adjoining lane (Stoertz 1998). The eastern rampart is identified as a broad ditch and earth bank, faced by a wall, and the western side of the rampart is marked by a field boundary. To the north, the defences are largely obscured by Langford Lane, although traces of the road surfaces and walling have been identified from cropmarks along the south of the roadside hedge. The southern town rampart is obscured by a hedge, and by the course of Chesterton Brook.
- 5.7 Previous archaeological surveys and investigations carried out within the monument (see Section 4), including excavations and aerial photographic transcription, have revealed evidence for the occupation of the site and other below-ground remains, all of which appear to survive comparatively well. A series of excavations have identified several phases of construction, with stone buildings gradually replacing earlier timber ones. Occupation appears to date from the post-conquest military phase, to continuing civilian occupation until at least the later 4th century AD. An

accurate plan of the intramural area at Alchester was mapped from aerial photography as part of the RCHME: Alchester Roman Town Project (1990). This plan recorded wall footings and robber trenches of several major buildings, defensive banks and metalled streets, areas of paving and the debris of collapsed buildings. The investigation also recorded areas of extramural settlement visible to the north, east and south of the walled area, which were characterised by indications of buildings and rectilinear ditched enclosures which conformed to the orthogonal alignment of the town defences and streets. A rectangular enclosure to the east of Alchester, identified as a military parade ground, almost certainly dates to the earliest, post-invasion phase of military activity and the establishment of a vexillation fort in AD 44 as a precursor to the civilian settlement (Stoertz 1998). A series of regular, ditched enclosures to the south of Alchester are arranged along the road, and have been interpreted as a Roman field system. This may represent an early example of formal land division, or cadastration, possibly under military administration. The RCHME survey also recorded earlier prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the settlement, comprising a banjo enclosure, hut circles and a number of sinuous ditches to the south-west, approximately located approximately 840m south-west of the Site (Fig. 3, 2)

- 5.8 The significance of Alchester Roman Site primarily derives from its proven evidential (archaeological) value, with the aforementioned investigations indicating that buried remains are likely to be well-preserved and, therefore retain the potential to yield further evidence about the establishment, occupation and abandonment of Roman settlements and commercial centres. The earthwork remains of the defences, although of variable levels of preservation, also retain evidential and historical illustrative values, and contribute further to the monument's significance.
- 5.9 The significance of Alchester Roman Town is further derived from its historical illustrative value, as the surviving remains reflect an important facet of Roman-period towns, economy and social custom. As the remains of a Roman small town, Alchester contributes to our understanding and historical sense of Roman occupation and urbanism in Britain, and of the military origins of civilian settlements. [The significance of the Scheduled Monument Site is heightened, to an extent, by the suggestion that Alchester has been identified, and firmly dated, as one of the earliest Roman military sites in Britain.

Physical Surrounds – 'what matters and why'

- 5.10 The Scheduled Monument occupies an area of land across the course of the Silchester-Dorchester-Towcester Road, and at the intersection of this road with the Cirencester-St Albans Road (now known as Akeman Street). The siting of the town in this location, at the intersection of these major roads, would have provided an important strategic vantage point and market centre.
- 5.11 The Scheduled Monument is located within a series of agricultural fields, featuring a number of trees, fences and telephone pylons. As there is limited public access to the Scheduled Monument and surrounding agricultural environs, observations for the purpose of this assessment were carried out from Wendlebury Road and Langford Road, as well as from within the part of the Site bordering the northern boundary of the Scheduled Monument.
- 5.12 The Scheduled Monument is currently in agricultural use, and appears in inward views from its environs as a number of large modern agricultural fields, set within a landscape of similarly large modern enclosures (Photograph 9). Historically, the environs of the Roman Town would have comprised a rural landscape of Romano-British field systems and enclosures laid-out on a similar alignment with the town defences and streets (Stoertz 1998). Although this landscape has been subject to boundary alteration and removal throughout the post-medieval and modern periods, evidence of these enclosures and field systems to the north, east and south, remains visible as cropmarks, and these have been mapped and recorded by a number of the surveys and investigations discussed in Section 4 (Fig. 4).



Photograph 9: View towards Alchester Roman Site from Wendlebury Road

- 5.13 The Oxford to Bicester Railway Line, which intersects the Scheduled Monument in the south-east, and the A41 (Oxford Road), to the west, are considered to contribute to the Scheduled Monument's significance, as they mark the outline of the town's defences.

Experience – 'what matters and why'

- 5.14 There is limited public access to the Scheduled Monument, and no on-site provision of information (e.g. public signage/interpretation boards). The archaeological interest of the monument is not, therefore, apparent to the uninformed observer. Within views from Wendlebury Road, or from the surrounding landscape, the monument simply appears as modern agricultural fields enclosed by tree-lined boundaries and hedges, and is thus comparable with much of the surrounding agricultural landscape. Consequently, the evidential and historical illustrative values of the Scheduled Monument are not immediately intelligible within views from ground level.
- 5.15 The Roman road running from the north of the Scheduled Monument towards Bicester can be best appreciated through its linear course, which is evident within the agricultural landscape to the north of the Site, and by the presence of possible Roman ditches situated on either side of Wendlebury Road.



Photograph 10: View towards Alchester Roman Site from Langford Road

- 5.16 Due to the presence of the Oxford to Bicester Railway Line to the south-east, and the A41 (Oxford Road) to the west, and the presence of well-established field boundaries, mature vegetation and deeply incised lanes, only limited views of the

Scheduled Monument are available from within its immediate environs, although parts of the monument may be glimpsed from Wendlebury Road (Photograph 9), Langford Road (Photograph 10), and the public footpath running through the monument to the south-east. From higher elevations, e.g. Graven Hill to the east, and the bridge crossing the A41 (Oxford Road), to the west, views of the Scheduled Monument are partly screened by intervening vegetation. The hedge-lines defining the fields within the scheduled area are visible, although these are not considered to contribute to the significance of the Scheduled Monument.

- 5.17 Due to the presence of intervening vegetation and built form, there are no clear views of the Scheduled Monument from within the proposed development Site, including from both Phase 1 and 2 areas (Photograph 11).



Photograph 11: View towards Alchester Roman Site from the north-east

Assessment of potential development effects

- 5.18 The area of agricultural fields to the north of Alchester Roman Site (**A**), outside the area of the Scheduled Monument, is proposed for business park development, with associated access via the spur running from the A41 in the west across Phase 1 of the Site, to Wendlebury Lane in the east.
- 5.19 As established in preceding paragraphs, the significance of the Scheduled Monument principally derives from those important evidential and historical illustrative values associated with its buried archaeological remains and surviving earthworks. Development within the Site will not affect the Scheduled Monument

directly, and therefore there will be no change to, or adverse impact upon, those principal contributors to the monument's significance.

- 5.20 The historical associations between the principal Roman routes – including Wendlebury Road and Akeman Street – will also remain unaffected; the course of Akeman Street runs outside the proposed development Site, and Wendlebury Road, which partly falls within the Site, is to be retained and developed, as necessary. While a section of Wendlebury Road would possibly be physically impacted in those locations dictated by the need for Site access, its alignment and the historical association of the former Roman road and the Monument would be unaltered. As mentioned in Section 4, a number of investigations have recorded the presence of the Roman road to the south-west and west of the Site, and any pre-application investigations would have potential to confirm the presence of the Roman road.
- 5.21 The assessment has concluded that the immediate and wider setting of the Scheduled Monument has been compromised by nearby urban expansion, and by the construction of the Buckinghamshire Railway to the east, and the A41 (Oxford Road) to the west. However, this assessment has concluded that setting does make a contribution to the significance of the Scheduled Monument, specifically as a result of the following:
- its association with a significant intersection of major Roman routeways; and
 - its association with contemporary archaeological remains in the immediate and wider landscape, including settlement, enclosures, field systems etc., which have the potential to contribute, through archaeological investigation, to the intelligibility of the landscape hinterland within which the town was established and developed.
- 5.22 The assessment has concluded that, due to the presence of modern transport infrastructure, deeply incised lanes and intervening vegetation, the Scheduled Monument cannot be perceived from within both Phase 1 and 2 areas of the Application Site, or from the surrounding landscape. The Site appears from a limited number of vantage points within the Scheduled Monument as an agricultural field set within a largely rural landscape.
- 5.23 However, as discussed in Section 4, a series of earthworks has been recorded and is visible on both aerial photographs, and on LiDAR plots, within both Phase 1 and

2 of the proposed development Site. Evidence of the Silchester-Dorchester-Towcester Roman Road has been recorded to the south-west and west of the Site. In addition, within the immediate environs of the Site, there exists a considerable expanse of late Iron Age and Roman archaeological remains suggesting that areas to the north, east and south of the Site were associated with extensive extramural settlement and agricultural field systems around the Roman Town.

- 5.24 It is concluded that the proposed development will result in the introduction of new construction, and associated infrastructure and landscaping, within the Site, and that this would result in change to the character of its agricultural surroundings. The assessment has concluded that any association between the features recorded within the respective Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas of the Application Site, and the Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town, has yet to be determined through any programme of staged archaeological investigation. Therefore, the proposed development could potentially result in harm to buried archaeological remains relating to the extramural element of the Scheduled Monument, the level of which would be determined by an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation.

Langford Park Farmhouse (B)

- 5.25 The Grade II Listed Langford Park Farmhouse is located approximately 600m to the north-east of the Site, on the eastern side of Buckinghamshire Railway (Fig. 5, **B**), and comprises an 18th or early 19th-century farmhouse of limestone rubble construction, with wooden lintels, rendered wall and plain-tile roofs. The roof is accompanied by two stacks, one to the left of the centre, and one to the right of the gable. Comprising two parallel ranges of one and two-storeys, plus attics, four windows of the rendered 19th-century range are accompanied by a rendered storey-band. A panelled door is accompanied by a rectangular overlight, with a rendered pilastered surround, and a large tripartite sash is located above a canted bay window. Other windows comprise twelve-pane sashes. The lower 18th-century rubble range, with steeper roof, extends beyond the main range to the right and comprises casements, except the central gabled section which has a sixteen-pane sash, and a raised section to the rear which has a pair of large twelve-pane sashes at the first floor.
- 5.26 The initial review of this Listed Building indicated that there only limited inter-visibility existed between it and the Site, and that the Listed Building is located at a sufficient distance from the Site to suggest that no historical or functional relationship existed between them. In addition, any inter-visibility appears to be

effectively screened by existing intervening vegetation along the Oxford to Bicester Railway Line, and along the eastern boundary of the Site. Inter-visibility is also restricted by the presence of intervening built form, including the sewage works located immediately to the north-east of the Site. The site visit amply confirmed this assessment.

- 5.27 On the basis of this assessment, including the distance from the Site and the lack of any historical or functional relationships, combined with prevailing intervening vegetation, the proposed development would not change the wider setting of the Grade II Listed Langford Park Farmhouse. The proposed development would not, therefore, affect any aspects of the Listed Building's significance, which principally derives from the historic and architectural interest of its physical form



6. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Significance of recorded heritage assets within the site

- 6.1 No designated heritage assets are recorded within the Phases 1 and 2 of the Site.
- 6.2 As discussed in Section 4, a series of earthworks are recorded in both Phase 1 and 2 of the Site. Although it is our current understanding that the features within the central portion of Phase 2, as mapped by the RCHME aerial photographic interpretation project (1990), are not considered to be Roman. However, the date and character of these features, and the remainder of those recorded within the Site by aerial photography and LiDAR data, has yet to be determined through archaeological investigation.

Summary of previous impacts

- 6.3 A review of available cartographic and documentary evidence indicates that the Site has been subject to limited modern development, comprising the construction of the chicken farm along the southern boundary of the Site and the construction of the spur joining Wendlebury Road in the east with the A41 in the west. Despite the disturbances noted above, it should be noted that it is common for archaeological remains to survive as ‘pockets’ within areas of disturbance, and the presence of the road across the Phase 1 area, and the construction of the chicken farm in Phase 2, would not preclude the survival of archaeological deposits within immediately surrounding areas.
- 6.4 Any previous impacts on potential buried archaeological remains within the remainder of the Site would chiefly result from historical agricultural practices, including ploughing, which may have caused disturbance to the upper horizons of any such remains.

Potential buried archaeological remains

- 6.5 The majority of recorded heritage assets within the surroundings of the Site comprise late Iron Age and Roman remains, and the assessment of available data has therefore indicated that there is high potential for the survival of remains of late Iron Age and Roman date within both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Site, due to its location adjacent to the Roman Town of Alchester and major Roman roads. As the Site lies outside existing and former settlements it is probable that it formed part of a wider agricultural hinterland during the Roman and medieval periods.

- 6.6 Within the wider environs of the Site, the evidence of late Iron Age and Roman-period activity recorded during the investigations at Faccenda Chick Farm (1983), and as part of the RCHME Level 3 aerial photographic interpretation project (1990), within the extramural settlement of Roman Alchester (1991), and Wendlebury Road, Bicester Phase 2 (2010), comprises evidence of settlement, field divisions, roads and trackways, earthworks, enclosures, and cemeteries.
- 6.7 Evidence of medieval, post-medieval and modern activity within the environs of the Site is limited to field divisions, land drains and service trenches. Such evidence of agricultural activity of medieval and later date would constitute heritage assets of limited heritage significance.

Potential development effects

Effects on archaeological remains

- 6.8 Construction effects will primarily arise from the excavation of building foundations, which may partially or totally result in the removal any underlying archaeological remains. Beyond the footprint of the proposed new buildings, potential impacts on the archaeological resource are expected to be comparatively limited, and may comprise localised excavations associated with services and drainage, as well as topsoil stripping and resurfacing for access roads and parking areas.
- 6.9 Any adverse impacts upon buried archaeological remains are likely to be permanent and irreversible in nature, although such impacts could be suitably addressed through a programme of archaeological mitigation, which may include geophysical survey.

Effects on the setting of heritage assets

- 6.10 This report has assessed the potential effects of the development upon the significance of designated heritage assets within the surrounding landscape, through alteration to their settings. With regards to surrounding Grade II Listed Buildings (**B-D**), it has been established that, due to the effects of intervening vegetation, built form, modern transport infrastructure, and distance, the Site does not comprise part of the settings of any of these designated assets, and the proposed development would not affect their significance in any way.
- 6.11 It has also been established that, due to the effects of distance, and the presence of intervening vegetation and modern transport infrastructure (A41), the special character and appearance of the Chesterton Conservation Area (**E**) would remain

entirely unharmed, and the proposed development would not affect the setting and significance of the four Grade II Listed Buildings located within it.

- 6.12 With regard to Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town (A), the assessment has identified a number of features within the Site which require further investigation, including earthworks within the central portion of the Phase 2 which are currently assumed to be of non-Roman date, together with a series of ridge and furrow earthworks to the north-east of Phase 2 and in Phase 1 of the Site. Based on the mapping of the extramural settlement of Alchester through the RCHME aerial interpretation project (1990), and other aerial photography and LiDAR data, the assessment has concluded that the Site is likely to be closely associated with this area of extramural settlement and field systems. In view of the close proximity involved, the assessment has concluded that any association between those archaeological features recorded within the Site and the adjacent Scheduled Monument should be confirmed by a programme of further investigation.

Effects on historic landscape character

- 6.13 The proposed development would introduce a degree of change to the historic landscape character of the Site, which is likely to have remained as farmland, or at least rural hinterland, since at least the Roman period. The Phase 2 area has been subject to limited recent change, including the development of an adjoining chicken farm along its southern boundary, and the assessment has identified a series of earthworks, of possible Roman, or later, date within this area.
- 6.14 Comprising an area of highway accommodation land between Wendlebury Road to the east, and the A41 to the west, Phase 1 was established in the mid-20th century as a result of the construction of the A41 (Oxford Road). The fieldscape within Phase 1 has also been subject to the construction of the slip road, connecting Wendlebury Road in the east, with the roundabout on the A41 (Oxford Road) to the west. Despite this, the assessment has concluded there is potential for the presence of archaeological remains of Late Iron Age and Roman date to be present in the Phase 1 section of the Site.
- 6.15 The field boundaries within the Phase 2 section of the Site are defined by hedgerows and hedge-lines, which may be considered important in accordance with the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (Appendix C). If the proposal includes the retention of these boundaries, this would reduce the level of impact on this aspect of the historic environment.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The effect of the proposed development on the known and potential heritage resource within the Site, and its surroundings, will be a material consideration in the determination of the planning application and it is a requirement of Policy Bicester 10, which allocated the Site for commercial development. This assessment has identified no overriding heritage constraints that would preclude development.
- 1.10 The Site is proposed for the development of a business park, with ancillary uses. At present, only the frontage land (Phase 1) which comprises an area of highway accommodation land approximately 4.2ha, is available with redevelopment. Access to Phase 1 of the Site will be provided via the slip road running through the Site from the roundabout on the A41 (Oxford Road) in the west, and off Wendlebury Road which runs north to south between Phase 1 and 2. It is anticipated that development of Phase 2 of the Site will follow in due course.
- 7.2 Due to the presence of a considerable amount of Roman and later prehistoric archaeological evidence within the Site's environs, including evidence of settlement, roads and trackways, field divisions, earthworks, and enclosures, and the presence of cropmarks within both Phase 1 and 2 of the Site, the potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains within the Site is considered to be high. From the medieval period onwards, the Site is thought to have comprised part of a wider farming hinterland, with known settlements located at some distance from, but not situated within, the Site itself.
- 7.3 The assessment has concluded that field boundaries within Phase 2 of the Site are defined by hedgerows and hedge-lines, may be considered important in accordance with the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (Appendix C).
- 7.4 As part of this report, an assessment of the setting of designated heritage assets within the wider environs of the Site has been undertaken. The setting assessment has concluded that the proposed development would result in no harm to the significance of the Listed Buildings assessed, and that there would be no harm to the setting, special character and appearance of the Chesterton Conservation Area.
- 7.5 With regards to the Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town, the assessment has identified a number of potential features within the Site that require further investigation. It is our current understanding that a series of cropmarks within the central portion of Phase 2 may not be of Roman date, although archaeological

investigation would be required to determine their date and character. The assessment has concluded that, due to close proximity, and the presence of potentially associated features within the Site which are visible as cropmarks and earthworks, a programme of further staged investigation would be required to determine any archaeological association between the Site and Alchester Roman Town.

- 7.6 The proposed development would introduce a degree of change to the historic landscape character of the Site, and as such would have the potential to result in a level of harm to the setting and significance of the Scheduled Monument. Paragraph 133 of the Framework states that: *‘where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm...local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss’*. Such an approach would be consistent with local planning policy, including Policy SO 15, Policy ESD 15 and Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway.
- 7.7 In view of the considerable evidence from investigation and aerial photographic transcription, it is evident that the environs of Alchester Roman Town are associated with numerous contemporary features which relate to extramural settlement and land divisions. Such environs are therefore integral to the setting of the Roman Town, have a close historical and functional relationship with the monument, and thus make an important contribution to its significance. This may be particularly the case as much of the rural landscape, especially to the south of the Scheduled Monument, is thought to have undergone relatively little change since the Roman period. To the north, more recent change is evident, including developments extending from the southern margins of Bicester. Although unconfirmed by archaeological investigation, it is entirely possible that archaeological remains within the Site are both contiguous, and contemporary, with those features mapped by the RCHME aerial photographic interpretation project, and may thus comprise part of the historic setting of the monument. We therefore strongly recommend that early consultation be sought with Historic England to ascertain the possible role of Scheduled Monument setting as a significant planning constraint in this case.

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