

Land at Bicester Gateway Oxfordshire

Heritage Desk-Based Assessment



for
Bloombridge LLP

CA Project: 660707
CA Report: 16322

July 2016

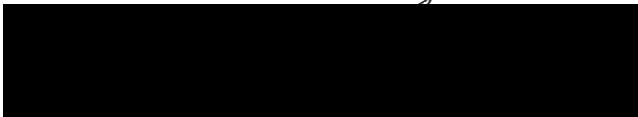


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SUMMARY

Project Name: Land at Bicester Gateway
Location: Oxfordshire
NGR: SP 57528 21021

Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned in April, 2016, by Bloombridge LLP, to carry out a heritage desk-based assessment in relation to proposed commercial development on land at Bicester Gateway, Oxfordshire, comprising a business park allocated by Policy Bicester 10 of the Cherwell Local Plan, July 2015. Only the frontage land (Phase 1), comprising 4.2 hectares, is currently available for development, with the remaining 15.13 hectares of the allocated site (Phase 2) to follow in due course. We have, however, assessed the Site (i.e. both Phases 1 and 2) on a comprehensive basis at this stage.

The assessment has concluded that, due to the presence of a considerable amount of later prehistoric and Roman-period evidence within the Site's environs, and the presence of cropmarks, the potential for the presence of significant remains within the Site from these periods is considered to be high. From the medieval period onwards, the Site is thought to have comprised part of a wider farming landscape, with known settlements located at some distance, but not situated within the Site itself.

The assessment has concluded that field boundaries within Phase 2 of the Site are defined by hedgerows and hedge-lines, and may therefore be considered important in accordance with the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (Appendix C).

The assessment has also concluded that the proposed development would not result in any harm to the significance of the constituent Listed Buildings, or to the setting, special character and appearance, of the Chesterton Conservation Area.

With regard to the implications of the adjacent Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town for the archaeological potential of the Site, the assessment has identified a number of potential features within the Site that may require further investigation. A series of recorded cropmark features within the central portion of the Phase 2 area are not necessarily of Roman date, although their exact date and character could be determined by archaeological investigation. The assessment has also concluded that, due to the close proximity to, and the presence of, potentially associated features within the Site (both in Phase 1 and 2), which have been recorded as visible cropmarks and earthworks, a programme of further, staged investigation would be required to determine the origins of the cropmarks, and any archaeological associations between the Site and Alchester Roman Town.

In summary, the proposed development would not result in either substantial, or less than substantial, harm (as specified in the Framework) to the Listed Buildings or Conservation Area within the environs of the Application,. The key aspects of setting which contributes to the significance of the heritage assets within the Site's wider environs would not be harmed, and therefore the proposed development would be consistent with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The assessment has concluded that the proposed development would have the potential to result in harm to the setting and significance of the neighbouring Scheduled Monument. Paragraph 133 of the Framework states that, where *'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.

Although unconfirmed by archaeological investigation, it is entirely possible that archaeological remains within the Site (both Phase 1 and 2) are both contiguous, and contemporary, with those features mapped by the RCHME aerial photographic interpretation project, and may therefore comprise part of the historic setting of the monument. We would therefore recommend that early consultation be sought with Historic England to ascertain the possible role of Scheduled Monument setting as a significant planning constraint.



1. INTRODUCTION

Outline

- 1.1 In December 2015, Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Bloombridge LLP, to undertake a heritage desk-based assessment in relation to a proposed development on land at Bicester Gateway, Oxfordshire, centred on NGR: SP 57424 21021 (henceforth referred to as 'the Site'; Fig. 1).
- 1.2 This document is required to inform a planning application for a mixed-use development, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has already been submitted to the Oxfordshire Planning Archaeologist, Richard Oram (Cotswold Archaeology 2016).

Location and Landscape Context

- 1.3 The Site for proposed development is comprised of two distinct parts, Phase 1 (4.2ha) and Phase 2 (15.13ha), and is located immediately to the east of the A41 (Oxford Road), and c. 1km south-west of the town of Bicester. Divided by Wendlebury Road, running north to south and connecting with the B4030 (Vendee Drive) in the west, the Site is of relatively level topography. The Site is located approximately 1km south-west of the town of Bicester, which is located approximately 16.9km to the north-east of Oxford, and c. 34km south-east of Banbury.



Photograph 1: View across Phase 1 of the Site towards the south-west



Photograph 2: View across Phase 1 of the Site towards the north



Photograph 3: View across Phase 2 of the Site towards the south

- 1.4 Phase 1 comprises an area of highways accommodation land, located between Wendlebury Road to the east, and the A41 (Oxford Road) to the west (Photograph 1 and 2). The fieldscape within the Phase 1 area is divided into two sections by a slip road connecting Wendlebury Road in the east, to the roundabout on the A41 (Oxford Road) in the west. Phase 2 currently comprises four agricultural fields under pasture, together with the buildings of a chicken farm, along with a pond along the southern boundary (Photograph 3). The eastern boundary of Phase 2 is demarcated by a tributary of the River Ray, and a public footpath runs through the eastern margins of the Site, connecting with Bicester Avenue in the north, and the Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town, to the south.



Photograph 4: View across Phase 2 of the Site towards the north



Photograph 5: View across Phase 2 of the Site towards the south-west

- 1.5 Within the immediate surroundings of the Site, a commercial development, comprising a supermarket, is located to the north, and a residential development, including a new Park and Ride facility, is located on the western side on the A41 (Oxford Road). Agricultural fields and woodland belts are located to east, south and west, and are intersected by the A41 running north-east to south-west, with the Graven Hill military depot to the east. Within the immediate surroundings of the Phase 2 area, Bicester Avenue and Wyevale Garden Centre are located to the north (Photograph 4), with a sewage works to the north-east. A chicken farm is

located along the southern boundary of Phase 2 (Photograph 5), and Promised Land Farmhouse is located to the south.

- 1.6 The wider environs of the Site are characterised by agricultural fields, interspersed by areas of woodland and isolated farmsteads. Modern residential development associated with Bicester is located to the north and west (Kingsmere), with Wendlebury c. 1.4km to the south, and with Chesterton c. 1.9km to the west.

Summary of Development Proposals

- 1.7 The Site is proposed for business park development, and ancillary uses (e.g. including a hotel). Access to Phase 1 of the Site is proposed via the slip road, running through the Site, from the roundabout on the A41 (Oxford Road) to the west, and off Wendlebury Road to the east. At present only Phase 1, comprising 4.2ha of highway accommodation land, is available for development, with the remaining 15.13ha of the allocated Site (Phase 2) to follow in due course.

Scope

- 1.8 This assessment focusses upon the cultural heritage resource identified within the Site itself, as well as a minimum 1km 'buffer' around the Site boundary, henceforth referred to as 'the study area' (Fig. 2). This assessment also considers potential adverse impacts on the settings of designated heritage assets within the wider area around the Site.
- 1.9 The main objectives of the desk-based assessment are:
- to identify designated heritage assets within the proposed development Site and study area;
 - to gather information on non-designated recorded heritage assets;
 - to assess the above baseline information, and offer an analysis of the potential for the presence of currently unrecorded heritage assets within the proposed development Site; and
 - to assess, as far as possible, the potential impact of the proposed development upon the significance of heritage assets, including the setting of designated heritage assets.

2. METHODOLOGY

General

- 2.1 The methodology employed during this assessment was based on key professional guidance, including the *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014); and Historic England's *Conservation Principles: policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (2008).
- 2.2 This desk-based assessment has considered a study area of 1km radius, centred on the Site (Fig. 2). The size of the study area ensured that data sources provided sufficient contextual information about the Site, and its surrounding landscape, from which to assess known and potential impacts on the heritage resource. The initial scoping for the setting assessment has considered designated heritage assets within 500m buffer around the Site.
- 2.3 Known heritage assets within the study area are discussed in Section 4. The assets relevant to this assessment are referred to in the text by a unique reference number **1**, **2**, etc. for archaeological records, and **A** - **E** for designated heritage assets, all of which are listed in Appendix A. Assets not relevant to this assessment have not been illustrated; these are listed in Appendix B.

Sources

- 2.4 The desk-based assessment required consultation of readily available archaeological and historical information from documentary and cartographic sources. The major repositories of information consulted comprise:

National Heritage List for England (Historic England)

- List of World Heritage Sites;
- Listed Buildings;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Registered Battlefields.

Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (OHER):

- Database of known archaeological sites, findspots, historic buildings and previous archaeological works (including features mapped from aerial photographs during the National Mapping Programme);

- Published and unpublished documentary sources (including development control site reports).

Oxfordshire Record Office (BRO):

- Published documentary sources;
- Historic maps and photographs.

Historic England Archives (HEA)

- AMIE (Archives and Monuments Information, England) data including known archaeological sites, findspots and previous archaeological works;

Other sources

- Online sources, including the Environment Agency, the British Geological Survey (BGS), Geology of Britain Viewer and local planning policy information.

Walkover Survey

Site visits were undertaken on the 24th and 31st May 2016, along with a study area walkover, in order to examine current land use and topography, and to assess any potential effects on the settings and significance of surrounding heritage assets. Designated heritage assets in the vicinity were also assessed at this time. The walkover was undertaken in clear weather, with good visibility.

Limitations

- 2.5 This assessment is principally a desk-based study, and has utilised secondary information derived from a variety of sources, only some of which have been directly examined for the purpose of this assessment. The assumption is made that this data, as well as that derived from other secondary sources, is reasonably accurate. The records held by the OHER and HEA are not a record of all surviving heritage assets, but a record of the discovery of a wide range of archaeological and historical components of the historic environment. The information held within it is not complete, and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown.
- 2.6 A walkover was conducted within the Site, and surrounding landscape, to assess any potential impacts on the significance of surrounding heritage assets due to changes to their setting. Due to the presence of livestock, access was restricted when conducting the walkover within the field towards the east of the Site. Despite discussions with Historic England, access for the purposes of a full walkover of the

Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town (A), immediately adjacent to the south of the Site, was not obtained. As such, the Scheduled Monument was assessed from the surrounding roads and from within the Site itself.

Heritage assets

- 2.7 Heritage assets are defined by the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework, Annex 2) as ‘a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets, and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)’. Designated heritage assets include: World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas. Non-designated heritage assets include sites held on the Historic Environment Record, as well as other elements of the landscape understood to have a degree of heritage value (see below).

Significance of heritage assets

- 2.8 Assessment of the heritage value (significance) of a site sets out to identify how particular parts of a place and different periods in its evolution, contribute to, or detract from, the identified heritage values associated with the asset.
- 2.9 Significance (for heritage policy) is defined in the Framework (Annex 2) as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical fabric, but also from its setting’.
- 2.10 To determine the significance of heritage assets, the significance is weighted upon the following criteria provided by Historic England in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2008). Within this document, significance is weighed by consideration of the potential for the asset to demonstrate the following criteria:
- **Evidential** value derives from ‘the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity’ (*ibid*, 28). Primarily relating to physical remains or historic material, evidential value can be extended to include buried archaeology.

- **Historical** value derives from ‘the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present’ (*ibid*, 28). Illustrative historical value depends on visibility in a way that evidential value does not; and ‘has the power to aid interpretation of the past [...] through shared experience of a place’ (*ibid*, 29). Associative historical value creates resonance through felt connections with a notable family, person, event or movement;
 - **Aesthetic** value derives from ‘the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place’ (*ibid*, 30). Aesthetic value might be generated through conscious design and artistic endeavour, fortuitous and organic change, and the relationship of structures and materials to their setting;
 - **Communal** value is tied to historical (associative) value and aesthetic value, deriving from ‘the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory’ (*ibid*, 31). Communal value may be commemorative, symbolic or social. The latter is typically ‘associated with places that people perceive as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence’ and might only be articulated when the resource is under threat (*ibid*, 32).
- 2.11 The significance of a heritage asset is typically derived from a combination of some or all of these values, and the setting of a heritage asset can contribute to, or detract from, any of these four values.
- 2.12 Further information on good practice in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (hereafter, ‘the Framework’), is provided within the *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015a). This document provides advice on the assessment of the significance of heritage assets in support of applications for planning permission, and emphasises that the information required regarding heritage significance should be no more than would be necessary to inform the planning decision.
- The setting of heritage assets***
- 2.13 The guidance on setting and development management, including assessment of the implications of development proposals, is provided by the *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: the Setting of Heritage Assets* (Historic England 2015b).

- 2.14 In accordance with this guidance, setting comprises '*the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced*' (Paragraph 4). All heritage assets have a setting, and elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to its significance and may affect the ability to appreciate that significance. The extent of the setting of a heritage asset is not fixed, and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve (Paragraph 4). The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by a reference to visual considerations, but also comprises other elements that contribute to the ways in which a heritage asset is experienced, including factors such as noise, dust and vibration; by spatial associations; and by an understanding of historic relationships (Paragraph 5).
- 2.15 The *Advice Note* provides guidance with regard to the assessment of the implications of development proposals upon the settings of heritage assets. The methodology for the assessment of the setting of heritage assets employed by Cotswold Archaeology has been informed by this guidance. A staged approach is recommended for this assessment. The first step is to identify the heritage assets affected, and their settings. The second step is to assess whether, how, and to what degree, these settings make a positive contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s), i.e. 'what matters and why'. This includes a consideration of the key attributes of the heritage asset itself, and then considers:
- the physical surroundings of the asset, including its relationship with other heritage assets; and
 - the way in which the asset is appreciated.
- 2.16 The third step (where appropriate) is to assess the effect of the proposed development on the significance of heritage assets through the consideration of the key attributes of the proposed development in terms of its:
- location and siting;
 - form and appearance;
 - additional effects; and
 - permanence.
- 2.17 The fourth step is to maximise enhancement and minimise harm, and the fifth step refers to making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes.
- 2.18 The settings assessment presented in this report considers Steps 1, 2 and 3, which are the steps normally undertaken to inform the planning process. Step 4 is

undertaken when it is considered necessary to specifically design or redesign a scheme to take heritage assets into account. This is not considered necessary in this case. Step 5 is a subsequent stage, also not applicable to this assessment.

Harm (impact or effect)

- 2.19 As clearly illustrated within the Framework, setting does not comprise a heritage asset in itself, and therefore any attempt to convey the impact or harm of a Project has to be framed within the tightly defined parameters of the harm to the significance of the heritage asset concerned. This is a fundamental principle. In summary, a Project could bring about change within a heritage asset's setting, causing harm to the significance of the heritage asset or the way in which the significance is experienced. References such as *'harm to the setting'* are therefore avoided.
- 2.20 Any quantitative description of change (or harm) is also avoided. Much like the scalar approaches to defining relative significance, those which adopt complex quantifying criteria are often weakened by circular definitions (i.e. *"a moderate impact equates to significant changes to many of the attributes of the asset"*).
- 2.21 The clear statements of significance (the *'what matters and why'*), and a sound understanding of the character of the change brought about by the *"Project"*, as presented in this assessment methodology, allow for a transparent articulation of the nature of the harm.
- 2.22 To further assist in the decision-making process, much like the approach taken for relative significance, a three-tiered approach is adopted to summarise the *'scale of the harm'*. It is not used as the sole descriptive frame of reference, but just a simplistic summary. Again, the language used is entirely consistent with the Framework and the Act, and provides sufficient information to reach an informed judgement.
- **Substantial harm:** defined with specific regard to change within the setting of a heritage asset that *"...would have such a serious impact on the significance of the asset that its significance was either vitiated altogether or very much reduced."*¹;
 - **Less than substantial harm;** and

¹ Paragraph 25 of the judgement by Jay J in R DCLG and Nuon UK LTD v. Bedford Borough Council [2013] EWHC 2847 (Admin).

- **No harm** (or ‘preservation’²), such that the attributes identified within the statement of significance have not been adversely affected.

2.23 The Framework does not employ the use of the terms ‘*substantial (or less than substantial) harm*’ with regard to non-designated heritage assets. However, for purposes of this assessment methodology it is deemed appropriate to apply the same terms for the ‘*scale of harm*’ to all types of heritage asset, whether designated or not.

2.24 Further information on good practice in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF is provided within the guidance Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015a). This document provides advice on the assessment of the significance of heritage assets in support of applications for planning permission, and emphasises that any required information regarding heritage significance should be no more than would be necessary to inform the planning decision.

² Paragraph 45 of the judgement by Lindblom J in R (Forge Field Society) v. Sevenoaks DC [2014] EWHC 1895 (Admin) “Preserving”, for both listed buildings and conservation areas, means doing ‘no harm’. Thus ‘preserving’ does not mean ‘no change’; it specifically means ‘no harm’.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Legislative framework, national planning policy and relevant sector guidance

3.1 This assessment has been compiled in accordance with the following legislative, planning policy and guidance documentation:

- National Heritage Act 1983 (amended 2002);
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- Hedgerows Regulations Act 1997
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012);
- *National Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* (Dept. for Communities and Local Government 2014);
- English Heritage (now Historic England): *Conservation Principles: policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (2008);
- Historic England: *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (2015a); and
- Historic England: *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2015b);

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

3.2. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act sets out the laws on planning controls with regard of Listed Buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest (Conservation Areas). The Act states that, “*in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses*” (Section 66).

3.3. Section 72 of the 1990 Act also states that “*with respect to any buildings or other land in a Conservation Area.....special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that Area*. It should be noted that the Act clearly refers to land ‘in’ a Conservation Area in this regard.

National policy: National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework; 2012)

- 3.4 The Framework sets out national planning policy, and relates to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. It defines the historic environment as *‘all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.’*
- 3.5 Individual components of the historic environment are considered to constitute heritage assets: *‘buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of their heritage interest.’*
- 3.6 Heritage assets include designated sites and non-designated sites, and policies within the Framework relate both to the treatment of heritage assets themselves, and their settings, both of which are a material consideration in development decision making.
- 3.7 Key tenets of the Framework are that:
- when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be (Paragraph 132);
 - significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset, or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to, or loss of, a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to, or loss of, designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional (Paragraph 132)
 - where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (Paragraph 134); and

- with regard to non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having due regard to the scale of any harm or loss, and to the significance of the heritage asset affected (Paragraph 135).
- 3.8 Local planning authorities are urged to request applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposed development, including any contribution made to significance by their setting. The level of detail required in the assessment should be *‘proportionate to the assets’ importance, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.*

Local planning policy

- 3.9 The Site is located within the administrative boundary of Cherwell District Council North Oxfordshire. The local planning policy is provided by the *Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031: Part 1* (adopted July 2015); the *Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031: Part 2* is currently under preparation.
- 3.10 There are a series of policies relating to specific areas within the Cherwell District, and within these policies there are a series of policies and principles which relate to the development of particular areas identified for development, including *Policy Bicester 10: Bicester Gateway*. Key site-specific design and place-shaping principles identified for the development of the Site, and relevant to this assessment, comprise:
- *‘Proposal should comply with Policy ESD 15.*
 - *A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, architecture, materials and colourings, and careful consideration given to building heights to reduce overall visual impact.*
 - *Conservation and enhancement of the setting of Alchester Roman Town Scheduled Ancient Monument and the setting out of opportunities to better reveal its significance.*
 - *Provision for a staged programme of archaeological work in liaison with statutory consultees, given the archaeological potential close to the site.*
 - *Structural planting and landscape proposals within the site, to include retention of existing trees and hedgerows, the enhancement, restoration or creation of wildlife corridors, and to limit visual impact of new buildings and car parking on the existing character of the site and its surroundings.*

- Development proposals to be accompanied and influenced by landscape/visual and heritage impact assessments'.

3.11 The relevant Local Plan policies relating to the historic environment comprise:

'Strategy Objective 15: To protect and enhance the historic and natural environment and Cherwell's core assets, including protecting and enhancing cultural heritage assets and archaeology, maximising opportunities for improving biodiversity and minimising pollution in urban and rural areas.

Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment:

Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the District's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential. New development proposals should:

- *Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions.*
- *Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions.*
- *Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density/development intensity.*
- *Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within Conservation Areas and their setting.*
- *Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, Conservation Areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets*

will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged.

- *Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*
- *Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages.*
- *Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette.*
- *Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features.*
- *Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed.*
- *Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space.*
- *Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.*
- *Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including Building for Life, and achieve Secured by Design accreditation.*
- *Consider sustainable design and layout at the masterplanning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout.*

- *Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies ESD 1 - 5 on climate change and renewable energy).*
- *Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD 17 Green Infrastructure). Well-designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality.*
- *Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible.*

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design & Access Statement. Further guidance can be found on the Council's website. 118 Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 Section B - Policies for Development in Cherwell. The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites. For major sites/strategic sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and high quality design is delivered throughout. Design Codes will usually be prepared between outline and reserved matters stage to set out design principles for the development of the site. The level of prescription will vary according to the nature of the site'.

- 3.12 The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Local Plan: Part 2. The issued Consultation Document was released in January, 2016.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE HERITAGE RESOURCE

Introduction

- 4.1 This section provides an overview of the historical and archaeological background of the study area, and of the region surrounding it, to provide a better understanding of the context and significance of the heritage resource that may be affected by the proposed development. The assessment will assess the potential for encountering buried archaeological remains within the Site, and seeks to predict their likely nature, date, extent and condition.
- 4.2 Fig. 2 provides an illustration of the designated assets within the environs of the Site (**A - E**), and recorded archaeological remains (**1 - 40**), of prehistoric date are illustrated on Fig. 3. Those of the Roman period are illustrated on Fig. 4, and of the medieval through to the modern period on Fig. 5. All of these heritage assets are listed in Appendix A. Those assets which are not illustrated predominantly include modern features. These assets are not considered to have influenced the historic development of the Site, but are nonetheless listed in Appendix B.

Designated heritage assets

- 4.3 There are no designated heritage assets within the Site itself, although the northern boundary of the Scheduled Monument of Alchester Roman Town, is situated adjacent to the southern boundary of the proposed development Site (Fig. 2, **A**).
- 4.4 Chesterton Conservation Area, including one Grade II* and four Grade II Listed Buildings, is located approximately 590m to the west of the Site (Fig. 2, **E**). Within the wider environs of the Site, the Bicester Conservation Area is located approximately 1.2km to the north-east, and the historic core of Wendlebury Village which, although not designated as a Conservation Area is associated with a significant number of Listed Buildings, and is located approximately 2km to the south-west.
- 4.5 A further five Grade II Listed Buildings are located elsewhere within the study area (Fig. 2). Within the vicinity of the Site, these include the Langford Park Farmhouse, which is located approximately 600m north-east of the Site (**B**), a bridge approximately 200m north-east of Lodge Farmhouse, approximately 460m to the south-west (**C**), and Oxford Lodge, which is located approximately 630m to the south-west (**D**).

4.6 There are no World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, or Registered Battlefields within the environs of the Site.

4.7 Designated heritage assets within the study area, and the surrounding landscape, are considered further in the settings assessment presented in Section 5 of this report.

Previous archaeological works

4.8 A large number of evaluations and excavations have been carried out in the immediate environs of the Site. Those most pertinent to the present study are illustrated on Fig. 2 and 3, and are listed in Appendix A. Key investigations referenced in this report include:

- excavations in the extramural settlement of Roman Alchester (1991) (Fig. 2 and 3, **11**, **11a**, **11b** and **11c**: Oxford Archaeology 2002). This included an area of land immediately adjacent to the south-western corner of the Site, and is a key consideration;
- evaluation at Wendlebury Road, Phase 2 (2010) (Fig. 2 **17**: Lewis 2010), on the western boundary of the Site, and is also a key consideration;
- excavations at Faccenda Chicken Farm (1983) (Fig. 2, **19**: Foreman and Rahtz n.d.), in the south-western corner of the central portion of the Site;
- excavations, geophysical surveys, an aerial photography interpretation projects conducted in the environs of Alchester Roman Site (Fig. 2 and 4, **10**, **11**, **20**, **21** and **30**), immediately to the south of the proposed development site; and
- excavations, trial trenching, evaluations, topographical survey, environmental impact assessment and an aerial photography interpretation project at Land to the south-west of Bicester, Stage 1 and Stage 2, 50m to the north-east of the Site (Fig. 2 and 3, **5**, **5a**, **5b**, **5c**, **5d** and **5e**: Wessex Archaeology 2009).

4.9 The archaeological finds and features recorded are discussed in the appropriate sections below.

Geology, topography and the palaeoenvironment

- 4.10 The Site is relatively level, and located on a gentle west to east gradient, rising from c. 65m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the Site, to c. 115m aOD at Gravenhill Wood, to the east.
- 4.11 The underlying geology within the Site is mapped as Kellaways Sand Member, a sedimentary bedrock laid down in the Jurassic Period, approximately 165 to 161 million years ago. The sedimentary bedrock comprises interbedded sandstone and siltstone. Within the north-western corner of the Site, the sedimentary bedrock comprises Kellaways Clay Member, a sedimentary bedrock comprising mudstone also laid down in the Jurassic Period. The western margins of the Site is overlaid by a superficial river terrace deposit, comprising sand and gravel laid down in the Quaternary Period, approximately 3 million years ago. The remainder of the Site is overlain by an superficial alluvial deposit, comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel laid down in the Quaternary Period, approximately 2 million years ago (British Geological Survey).
- 4.12 The soilscape within the Site is mapped as a slowly-permeable seasonally-wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soil, suitable for grass production and some cereal production and woodland. The fieldscape towards the east of the Site is mapped as loamy soils with naturally high groundwater, suitable for arable and root cropping. This generally gives way to pasture in those locations where soils are excessively stony or wet (Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute 2016).

Prehistoric (pre-43 AD)

- 4.13 No finds and features dating to the prehistoric period are recorded within the Site.
- 4.14 Within the study area, prehistoric activity is presented by two interrupted ring ditches, which are suggested to represent Bronze Age barrows. These are located approximately 440m to the north (Fig. 3, **1**), with a further two ring ditches located approximately 910m to the south-east of the Site (Fig. 3, **3**). Visible on geophysical survey, and partly excavated during an evaluation, the larger barrow to the north of the Site produced Early Bronze Age collared urn pottery sherds from the ditch fills (OHER 2016).
- 4.15 Prehistoric evidence recorded during the *Land south-west of Bicester Stage 1* Project by Wessex Archaeology, located approximately 50m to the north-west of the Site, comprised an Early Bronze Age barrow, and evidence of late Iron Age

settlement, including field systems, hearths pits, post holes, and ditches. (Fig. 3, **5** and **5a**). The concentration of late Iron Age features is suggested to represent a dispersed, small-scale farmstead settlement, with associated intervening small-scale rectilinear field systems. The ditches, although associated with the settlement, were recorded as relatively insubstantial, even after the effects of truncation had been considered, thus suggesting a non-defensive settlement (Wessex Archaeology 2009).

- 4.16 Further evidence of prehistoric activity comprises a lithic implement, recorded during an evaluation (2005) at Priory Road, located approximately 990 north-east of the Site, a Mesolithic flint scatter, comprising well-preserved worked flints and cores, approximately 500m to the north-east, and a Neolithic axe, approximately 620, to the north-east (Fig. 3, **8** and **9**). A fragment of a sword from a Bronze Age hoard was recorded during 1989, immediately to the south of the Junction between the A421 and Bicester Bypass, located approximately 800m to the north of the Site (OHER 2016).
- 4.17 Further Iron Age evidence comprises a Banjo enclosure and possible hut circles and trackways, located approximately 840m south-west of the Site (Fig. 3, **2**), and the presence of a second possible enclosure and trackway, visible on aerial photography taken in 2005, approximately 840m to the south-east (Fig. 3, **4**). Recorded as part of the RCHME Level 3 aerial photographic interpretation project which was undertaken at Alchester in 1990, the Banjo enclosure was recorded with distinct entrance antennae, one of which formed part of a trackway that extended into the interior of the enclosure. Within the enclosure, ring ditches were suggested to represent individual hut circles, alongside more amorphous features. External to the enclosure, a possible hut circle and a number of linear features were also recorded, and initially interpreted as a potential stock enclosure. However, it should be noted that these, and the remainder of the amorphous maculae present in the field, could be of geological origin.
- 4.18 Late Neolithic to late Iron Age settlement was recorded as part of the excavations in the extramural settlement of Roman Alchester, at the crossroads between the A421 and Chesterton Lane (site A), approximately 360m south-west of the Site (Fig. 3, **11a**). Recorded during evaluation trenching in March 1991, features included Bronze Age burials and Iron Age ditches, Neolithic and Bronze Age flintwork and residual Beaker material. At sites B, C and D, excavations recorded a sequence of

middle to late Iron Age gullies, postholes and sub-rectangular enclosures (Fig. 3, **11b** and **11c**).

- 4.19 Evidence of late Iron Age and Roman settlement and enclosure has also been recorded through archaeological investigations approximately 960m and 900m to the north-east (Fig. 3, **6** and **7**), and c. 140m to the west (Fig. 3, **12**). A number of recorded investigations at Alchester, immediately to the south of the Site (Fig. 3, **10**), have identified important aspects of the military and civilian development of the town.

Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)

- 4.20 There is a considerable amount of evidence for Roman activity within the study area. Beyond the confines of Alchester Roman Town, evidence of Roman activity comprises settlement and agricultural activity, including enclosures, paddocks, boundary ditches, and numerous findspots, located approximately 500m, 690m, 900m, and 970m to the north-east, c. 110m to the west, and c. 70m, 110m, 290m, 510m, 800m, and 810m to the north-west of the Site (Fig. 4, **5b-5d**, **6-9**, **13**, **32-34**).

Alchester Roman Town

- 4.21 Alchester, a Roman ‘small town’ and Scheduled Monument (**A**) is located at the junction of five Roman roads, with a defended area of approximately 10.5ha, immediately to the south of the proposed development Site. Alchester is located approximately 500m south of the Cirencester – St Albans (*Corinium – Verulamium*) section of Akeman Street, and lies at the intersection with an unnamed road running between Bicester to the north and Dorchester-on-Thames to the south (Fig. 4, **14** and **15**). Another road runs on an east/west axis across the town, and is clearly visible beyond the ramparts of the town defences (Figure. 4, **22** and **24**). A geophysical survey and watching brief (1998-1999) undertaken approximately 850m south of the Site, recorded three ditches, of which two appear to form a continuation of the north/south Roman road, running through the proposed development site and the centre of the Scheduled Monument (Fig. 4, **22**).
- 4.22 Although various investigations have taken place on Wendlebury Road itself, and immediately to the east and west, none have conclusively identified the position of the Alchester to Towcester Roman road, although it was visible as an *agger* (raised causeway) within the site of Alchester itself. Akeman Street was examined at the junction at Chesterton Lane in 1937 (Fig. 4, **12**). The intersection between the Alchester to Towcester road and Akeman Street is suggested to have been located

just to the north of Alchester, possibly to the south-west of the proposed development Site (Lewis 2010).

4.23 A number of investigations (Fig. 4, **10** and **16**) (Appendix A) have identified several phases of construction at Alchester. These have indicated that stone buildings replaced earlier timber ones in the second century AD, and that occupation continued from the mid-1st until at least the later 4th century AD. Of these excavations, the most recent comprise:

- a geophysical survey at Langford Lane (2008; 2007), conducted on the eastern side of Alchester approximately 380m south-east of the Site (Stratascan 2009; 2008; John Moore Heritage Services 2009). The survey recorded a rectangular enclosure, formerly suggested to have been a Roman fort, and a set of probable field boundaries (Fig. 4, **30**).
- a watching brief at F-Station, Chesterton (2002), approximately 120m south-west of the Site, did not reveal any archaeological features or finds (John Moore Heritage Services 2002) (Appendix B);
- three seasons of investigation at Alchester Roman town (2000), located approximately 760m south-west of the Site (Sauer 2000). Comprising four trenches excavated over the south-west angle of the town defences, details of the town wall, ramparts and its robbing in the Saxon period were recorded (Fig. 4, **34**);
- an air photograph interpretation RCHME: Alchester Roman Town Project (1998; 1992), comprising a Level 3 photogrammetric survey on the area of land around the Roman town. This recorded both the Iron Age banjo enclosure and an accurate plan of the town centre set within a highly-planned landscape context (Fig. 4, **20**) (Stoertz 1998); and
- excavations in the extramural settlement of Roman Alchester (1991) in advance of road construction on the A421 (Oxford Road), immediately to the west, and approximately 30m south-west of the Site (Oxford Archaeology 2002). The investigations recorded extensive evidence of Roman, and earlier, activity (Fig. 4, **11**, **11a**, **11b** and **11c**).

4.24 The defences of the Roman Town are almost square in plan, with each of its sides c. 350 yards in length. Originally bounded by a wall-faced rampart and ditch,

remains of the ditch are well preserved to the west, where they still form a field boundary, while the earthwork rampart remains easily distinguishable on the east and west sides. The northern rampart has disappeared as a result of road construction, and the course of the Chesterton Brook, to the south, has replaced the former ditch. Within the intramural area, two banks cross each other at right angles diametrically, with one running north/south and occupying the line of the Roman Road from Watling Street to Dorchester, while the other runs east/west and continues beyond the walled town towards the ford to the east. Additional subsidiary banks once existed within the Roman town, and remain traceable in the south-western corner, but have been removed in the north-east as a result of subsequent ploughing. Circular mounds are recorded in the north-east and south-east of the intramural area; the north-east circular mound has been proven by archaeological investigation to be a tower (Fig. 4, **21**). Archaeological investigations in this area, approximately 650m south-west of the Site, recorded details of an internal road, alongside evidence of a workshop, granary, the early fort, a tower, gate and water channel. Plans of buildings have also been recorded elsewhere within the Scheduled Monument (Fig. 4, **18**, **25** and **28**), and during the construction of the railway line, in 1848, sixteen skeletons were recorded approximately 660m to the south of the proposed development site (Fig. 4, **29**). The remains of a further 28 inhumation burials, along with pottery sherds and demolition material, were located approximately 560m to the south (Fig. 4, **27**), and a single inhumation, Samian pottery and a cremation burial were uncovered during non-archaeological trenching approximately 260m south of the Site (Fig. 4, **26**).

- 4.25 Identified as a cropmark representing a possible Roman fort as part of the RCHME project, archaeological investigations undertaken approximately 920m south-east of the Site recorded a smaller, rectilinear enclosure which appeared to be linked by a straight section of road or trackway. It is suggested that this may represent a military parade or training ground (Fig. 4, **31**). A metalled, ditched road leads north from this feature towards the town's east/west-aligned axial road, and the southern side of the suggested parade ground was found to coincide with the perimeter of a Roman ditch (Fig. 4, **20**) (Stoertz 1998).
- 4.26 Findspots within the Scheduled Monument and its immediate environs comprise pottery, ironwork, copper alloy items and bone; a steelyard weight of lead with traces of a bronze case; a second lead weight; coins; and a piece of scale armour (*lorica squamata*) consisting of four linked bronze plates (Fig. 4). Approximately