

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

KINGS SUTTON

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Funded by English Heritage

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2002

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BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This is one of a series of reports compiled by Northamptonshire County Council's Historic Environment Team as part of the English Heritage funded Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of Northamptonshire, which is intended to provide an effective information base and research framework to guide the management of the county's urban archaeological resource. The survey encompasses all urban settlements and others that may have had some urban attributes, from the Roman period to the 1930s. The only exception is Northampton, which is the subject of an Intensive Urban Survey in its own right.

Each report comprises three distinct sections: a detailed description of the town in each major period; an assessment of potential and definition of a research agenda; and a strategy for future management. A consistent approach has been taken in the presentation of the description in each report with detail being presented under each standard category even where this has no direct obvious relevance to the urban aspects. This section has however been presented in the form of a gazetteer with standard headings so enabling the reader to identify those sections of particular interest. The Kings Sutton report by Jeremy Taylor covers just the Roman settlement as it lies in isolation from any later settlement. The adjacent Saxon & Medieval market settlement was considered in the initial stages of the EUS, but was felt to have insufficient potential for more detailed assessment. A summary of the research is presented in Appendix 1 of the EUS Overview report. Other contributions to the EUS on digital mapping, database input and related work for the EUS have been made by various individuals including Christine Addison, Chris Jones, Paul Thompson, Rob Atkins, Phil Markham and especially Tracey Britnell and Abi Kennedy.

The first objective of the report is to determine layout, character and chronology of development of the Roman town. An attempt has been made to identify the various components of the town which are likely to have left identifiable archaeological remains and, as far as practicable, to define the exact location and extent of these buried or upstanding 'monuments'. They have also all been assessed for likely current survival and their potential to contribute to research objectives. The relationship of the town to its hinterland has also been considered and the potential for study of that interaction has been assessed. In this way the report aims to provide a well founded research framework, establishing the current state of knowledge of Kings Sutton Roman town and defining a research agenda which can guide future archaeological investigation within the town. Conservation objectives have also been defined. This report should be viewed as a starting point rather than a definitive study, which it certainly is not. If this report serves its purpose then it will need to be regularly reviewed and substantially revised in future years as archaeological investigations are undertaken.

Given the limitations of time, which inevitably must guide the conduct of a countywide project, it has been necessary to limit the depth of investigation. No original archaeological earthwork or other such field survey has been conducted, but all available existing archaeological data has been consulted. Each town has been visited to examine the topography of the town and an assessment attempted as to the general state of archaeological survival.

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SUMMARY

Kings Sutton is one of the 14 nucleated settlements incorporated within the current survey that acted as local or regional centres in the Roman period. Located roughly midway between the roadside settlement at Lower Ley in Oxfordshire and Brackley to the east, Kings Sutton is probably one of the smaller nucleated settlements in the county (c.8-12ha) and probably acted as a local centre at the junction of a minor road and a previously unremarked route through the south west of the county linking the Towcester-Alchester road with the Fosse Way.

Virtually no excavation has been carried out on the site and currently our understanding of it is largely dependent upon aerial photographic evidence and two limited field walking surveys. These suggest that the settlement probably first developed in the Iron Age around a cluster of enclosures to the south west of the Roman focus that covered an area of at least 4ha. The Roman settlement developed partly around a local road junction but predominantly along some 500m of the Lower Ley to Brackley route. Like a number of the Nene valley towns Kings Sutton may have owed its existence to the strategic advantage of its location on the road network and to the wealth of its surrounding agricultural landscapes.

The settlement's layout may derive from a shift in occupation (the date of which is unknown) some 100m north east to form a ribbon development along a newly established through route around a local road junction. Seemingly extensively occupied by the second century AD, the developed plan of the settlement is still poorly understood and may well extend further north and east than is currently known.

In the absence of excavation, or even an analysis of the existing field walked material, little can be said about the settlement's historical development. The aerial photographic information suggests that the settlement consisted of a series of irregularly shaped ditched enclosures laid out to either side of the main roads within which may have stood stone buildings of uncertain form fronting onto the main road. In the central area of the settlement within Blacklands the superimposition of enclosures indicates a long and more complex sequence to development. Nineteenth century records by Baker (1822, 703) and Beesely (1841, 33) both note the discovery of inhumations in rough stone cists and may imply the presence of a cemetery that is unfortunately not accurately located.

Though only a preliminary judgement the present evidence suggests that Kings Sutton is likely to be a further example of a small group of unwallled nucleated roadside settlements from the county similar to those now largely destroyed at Duston and Kettering.

DESCRIPTION

1.0 TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY

The Roman settlement at Kings Sutton lies on a spur of marlstone sloping slightly to south west above the river Cherwell, between 95 and 115m AOD. The full extent of the settlement is not well understood but may well cover some 14ha (including the earlier Iron Age focus) predominantly along the course of an east to west road visible on cropmarks for at least 900m. Largely lying above the break of slope down to the river part of the Iron focus may have extended over the break down to the south west.

2.0 HISTORICAL & TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT

Prehistoric

Evidence for Iron Age occupation at Kings Sutton is limited but potentially very significant. No definitive dating for the Iron Age settlement is possible from the field walking but the possibility that it constitutes a precursor to the Roman settlement remains a distinct possibility. No Iron Age coin finds are currently recorded but in the absence of much systematic investigation through excavation, field walking or metal detecting this is perhaps not surprising.

Roman

The earliest subsequent occupation that has been dated is to the early second century from antiquarian coin finds and notes on the field walked pottery. Occupation then certainly appears to have continued through to the fourth century when in the absence of any later discoveries, it is likely to have been abandoned. The absence of excavations within the occupied area makes it impossible to judge when the road and its flanking boundary systems were laid out but settlement appears to have been concentrated within a band c.70m either side of the main roads. This plan appears to have formed the basic framework around which all subsequent activity focused. The early nature of settlement in this area is unclear as no first century buildings have been excavated. The earliest buildings to date are likely to be the probable round houses identified on aerial photographs within the Iron Age focus of settlement to the southwest. There is also no evidence of early military occupation of the area and currently little in the artefact record to suggest any such link with the early history of the settlement.

Saxon

The latest recorded Roman coin from the antiquarian records is an uncertain fourth century issue. No structural evidence or pottery from the site can confidently be ascribed to the late fourth-early fifth century, though a number of recorded fourth century pottery types that may continue this late are present in the field walked collections. It is thus difficult to assess the nature of any late Roman activity at Kings Sutton but the absence of any Saxon material in the immediate environs of the site suggests that any continuity with the major Saxon centre near to the village of Kings Sutton is not direct.

3.0 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

3.1 COMMUNICATIONS

Information about the road layout primarily comes from aerial photographic evidence and suggests potentially quite complex development around a junction between a side road heading in the general direction of Duston and the road running east southeast towards the Alchester to

Towcester road. The details of the road system within the settlement are not clear but existing plots of the aerial photographs indicate a series of small side tracks running perpendicular to the east west route providing no more than limited local access to neighbouring enclosures or the land immediately beyond. One major ditched enclosure and boundary system running north west to south east at the western end of the settlement may be part of a separate (Iron Age?) phase of occupation but could alternatively mark the line of a further side track running south from the main road to the edge of the spur. The overall plan of the road system is less clear than a number of the other towns in the county. There is, nevertheless, sufficient current knowledge to suggest its likely overall plan, if not its date. Essentially the settlement was focused along the suggested Lower Ley to Brackley road with some limited additional development along small, localised track ways and a possible road to the northeast running across the Nene valley towards the Late Iron Age and Roman settlement at Duston. A trial excavation at SP 4984 3734, c.500m to the east of the settlement failed to identify the main road, though surface quarrying for limestone was likely to have previously removed all traces (Ivens 1997).

3.2 DEFENCES

There is no evidence that the town was ever enclosed within a defensive circuit.

3.3 BUILDINGS

At present no buildings have definitely been recognised at Kings Sutton but the aerial photographic plots identify a series of ring ditches that may indicate round house drainage gullies in the south western (probable Iron Age) part of the settlement.

3.4 COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Evidence for craft production and the study of trade is almost entirely absent at Kings Sutton. Within the area of the two field walking surveys the absence of published syntheses of the artefactual evidence, currently limits what can be said. This and the absence of systematic field walking over the remaining fields or excavation in any other part of the settlement mean that there is virtually no artefactual or structural evidence upon which to base analysis.

3.5 RELIGIOUS, RITUAL & FUNERARY

3.5.1 Temples and Shrines

Neither the field walking nor the aerial photographs provide any evidence for the presence of temples or shrines within the settlement. The air photographs at Kings Sutton, however, provide very little evidence for buildings of any description and it is possible that a significant shrine remains to be discovered. The field walked and other earlier finds provide no evidence for a major religious focus within the settlement.

3.5.2 Cemetery

Antiquarian notes by Baker (1822) and Beesley (1841) record a total of eight inhumations of probable Roman date aligned east to west. These may be part of an otherwise unrecorded cemetery but equally could be the remains of a series of back plot burials of the kind found at Ashton. Unfortunately neither group of burials is accurately located and so at present it is impossible to determine which interpretation is more probable. The presence of cists or stone linings in a number of the graves suggests they are likely to be later Roman or possibly even post Roman in date. The absence of evaluation around the fringes of the settlement means that the existence of cemeteries associated with the settlement cannot be ruled out. It is possible that one lay beside the east to west road towards the fringes of the settlement or to the northeast in as yet uninvestigated areas.

3.6 LAND USE

The location of the site on a relatively high promontory suggests that excavation at Kings Sutton may not have great potential to provide information from waterlogged deposits about the immediate environment or of different areas within the settlement. Unfortunately, in the absence of publication of any ecofactual data from excavation, evidence for possible agricultural practice is absent.

The large maculae (probable pits or wells) recorded on the aerial photographic plots largely lie within the area of Iron Age occupation and towards the northern fringe of the Roman settlement. These may provide localised deposits of high potential but may provide little agricultural or environmental information if as elsewhere they were dug for sand and gravel and rapidly backfilled after use.

The absence of excavation or other evaluation work close to the brook to the south of the site and River Cherwell prevents any assessment at present of the extent of alluvium or palaeochannels. Any development to the south or west of the settlement may need to consider the potential for palaeoenvironmental work but the watercourses distance away suggest they may be marginal value.

II ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE AND SURVIVAL

Kings Sutton is probably a significant example of a class of small to medium sized undefended small towns of a kind not uncommon to the region. The settlement is probably closest in comparison to Duston, and Kettering, where settlement appears to have had a significant Iron Age precursor but subsequently was primarily a ribbon development along a secondary Roman road through the region. Importantly, and unlike the other two, almost all of the core of the settlement is still intact and has a limited but useful record of aerial photography and field walking. Unfortunately, the settlement has never been the focus of sustained archaeological interest and consequently has no systematic field walking over much of its extent, geophysical or modern research excavation evidence. Although there are extensive areas of quarrying to the northeast these do not appear to have impinged on the settlement itself. As a consequence the site can be considered a relatively well preserved example of its kind in need of much further work.

1.0 DOCUMENTARY

No contemporaneous epigraphic or literary sources about Roman Kings Sutton are known.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL

The quality of air photographic information about the core of the settlement is moderate and mainly acts as a guide to the layout of ditch systems, roads and pits. In common with the evidence from Whilton Lodge and Ashton, however, it provides little or no information on the nature and location of buildings in the town and consequently equally little on settlement form, density and zonation. Nevertheless, the air photographic plots provide some guide to the overall morphology of the settlement except in several key areas. The main caveats in air photographic evidence come from the area covering the eastern end of the town away from the main road, and more detailed information on potential road and boundary layouts to the north of the modern track bounding Blacklands field.

The absence of systematic field walking to the east and south west of Blacklands field or any geophysical survey hampers our understanding of the overall extent of the settlement and potentially its development over time, though some estimate can be made on the basis of the aerial photographic evidence and earlier observations and chance discoveries.

The single most valuable archaeological data set available for Kings Sutton remains, the aerial photographic plots. The absence of any detailed assessment of the field walked material from either Hall's or Foard's surveys (Foard 1982) remains a significant obstacle to any chronological understanding of the settlement's development.

Survival

The extensive gravel extraction to the north east of the town does not appear to have impinged upon significant archaeological deposits. Antiquarian comments suggest that archaeological deposits in other parts of the town may have been damaged in the course of early modern ploughing and digging but this seems to have been on a small scale largely related to drainage work. Unfortunately, the location and extent of this earlier disturbance is unknown. These and the modern farm buildings of Twyford Barn have probably damaged no more than 1-2percent of

the total occupied area. Most of the rest of the settlement, however, is intact and the main archaeological threat today remains present and future cultivation. Given the ephemeral nature of many later Roman buildings in the county and the known disturbance of many probable stone structures recorded by Foard in 1982, it is probable that further erosion through ploughing represents a continuing and significant threat to the archaeological potential of the town, especially in relation to the study of its late Roman deposits.

Evidence for occupation in areas to the east of Blacklands, further west along the main road towards its probable crossing of the Cherwell, and to the south west over the scarp slope is currently scarce, but each or all may prove important peripheral parts of the town containing small enclosures, track ways and a cemetery.

The absence of any archaeological work around the likely river crossing also currently means that it is impossible to be sure of the town's western extent and whether there is any evidence for an area of peripheral activity in this direction. Furthermore, although aerial photographs indicate that a road runs northeast from the town towards Duston, there is currently little understanding of the extent to which occupation may extend alongside it, or even of the precise course of the road out of the town in this direction.

2.1 Settlement Morphology and Communications

The layout of the roads and property boundaries at Kings Sutton are only moderately well understood and provide a fragmented picture of the overall morphology of the settlement. To the north east of the Lower Ley to Towcester-Alchester road the line of a side road towards Duston is known for a short distance. There are southerly branching tracks visible on the aerial photographs, but their interpretation is problematic and it is not possible to determine, in the absence of other sources whether they constitute more than access ways to properties. The course of the main road and a possible further southerly branch road to the west of the town are moderately clear in Blacklands field but are not recorded beyond.

To the west of the town the direction and crossing point of the main road is also currently unknown. All of these areas would greatly benefit from geophysical survey to determine the overall layout of the town's roads and to begin to assess their relationship to the enclosure complexes of probable Iron Age date to the southwest. The most obvious additional future requirement would be for evaluation in advance of any development to establish the location and form of the main road to the west of the settlement on the floodplain either side of the stream and any evidence for the form and date of a river crossing.

Further afield the course of the road running north east from Kings Sutton may lead to the late Iron Age and Roman settlement at Duston. Its direction and overall course, however, remain largely unknown.

2.2 Buildings

Virtually nothing is known about the density, location and state of preservation of buildings along the main road frontages. The 1982 field survey identified dense spreads of stone along both main road frontages indicating the location of the main stone buildings within the settlement. These are probably likely to be simple strip buildings the main threat to which is undoubtedly continued cultivation. It is likely that significant damage has already occurred to many of the later stone buildings, particular given the likelihood of early modern digging for drainage. At present nothing is known of the quantity and form of buildings across the settlement but better plotting of stonework visible on the ground surface as part of systematic field walking would probably help provide a generalised picture of their distribution.

2.3 Commerce & Industry

Unsurprisingly, no clear structures such as furnaces, kilns, and ovens related to manufacturing have yet been recorded at Kings Sutton. Most such features are surface built though with little or no earth fast features and are particularly susceptible to any episodes of deeper ploughing. At present there is no evidence that the site was a centre for the production or processing of metal work, pottery or bone, though it may have acted as a point for the redistribution of regionally produced pottery and other domestic artefacts. The extant artefact record provides a very limited resource for the study of such craft and trade related issues but is in any case as yet unanalysed. This information should be augmented by further systematic and accurately recorded metal detecting surveys that would thus allow consideration of the overall economic development of the town and areas of potential economic zonation within it.

2.4 Religious, Ritual & Funerary

The antiquarian records for Kings Sutton provide very little data for the study of Roman burial practices in the town. Information on the eight burials from the nineteenth century is very scanty but at least hints at the possible presence of a cemetery close to the core of the town in Blacklands field. The limited extent of the earlier drainage works may indicate the potential for the survival of a cemetery, or at least further burials. No further evidence for burial is known, though others may well exist around the fringes of the town. Development around the fringes of the known settlement area close to the course of known Roman roads should require evaluation in order to check for potential further burial areas.

At present there is no significant evidence for shrines or temples within the town. Their presence, however, cannot be ruled out and field walking, geophysical survey and metal detecting of the cultivated areas should be a key priority in this regard.

2.5 Landscape & Environment

In the almost complete absence of excavation the potential of surviving deposits are unknown. Few deposits with the exception of the wells and possibly roadside boundary ditches closest to the brook or river Cherwell are likely to be waterlogged but the floodplains of either may provide data for the riverside environment to the south west and west of the town.

Unlike a number of the other Northamptonshire towns there is also little or no palaeoenvironmental information currently available from the immediate hinterland of the town. The survival of significant tracts of land in and surrounding the town have the potential to provide good suitable deposits for future sampling.

3.0 HINTERLAND

For the purposes of assessment of the hinterlands of the Roman towns an arbitrary boundary of 10km radius was established and its potential graded according to professional judgment. A wider understanding of the role of urban foci in the region and their relationship with surrounding agricultural landscapes is better reviewed as a whole and the findings of such an approach to Northamptonshire are summarized in the Roman period section of the general report of the Extensive Urban Survey.

The immediate historic landscape of the settlement at Kings Sutton has seen significant destruction through mineral extraction to the north and east. To the east earlier mineral extraction proceeded without significant archaeological record and may well have destroyed the course of an important road running from Kings Sutton in the direction of Towcester. It may

also have even impinged on the eastern and northeastern fringes of the settlement itself. To the south and west, however, there the landscape is dominated by rural land that has seen little or no development between the settlement and the river Cherwell. In this respect both the settlement and its immediate landscape along the valley are potentially well preserved.

The broader 10km hinterland is also dominated by modern agricultural landscapes with good potential for study and locally a useful tradition of field survey. Unusually for Northamptonshire, the floodplain and gravel terraces to the west have not been touched by mineral extraction in the Cherwell valley but the area has also seen little or no systematic archaeological work on either side of the county boundary. The small amount of developer funded work, relatively limited amount of local field work and the absence of research projects in the area means that surprisingly little is still known about Roman rural settlement and road networks. The only exceptions, the recent A43 road scheme and the Whittlewood project both somewhat marginal to Kings Sutton's hinterland lying to the extreme east. Otherwise only the development of Brackley and Middleton Cheney in Northamptonshire and Banbury in Oxfordshire has led to the destruction of significant blocks of the Roman landscape.

Given this history of development and fieldwork only a very fragmentary picture of overall patterns of settlement and land use in the late Iron Age and Roman period around Kings Sutton is possible. On present evidence, however, the Roman landscapes around Kings Sutton present a relatively high archaeological potential for study for two reasons. First, the extensive and contiguous survival of large parts of the Cherwell valley landscape could provide the opportunity for one of the fullest pictures of the development of rural settlement, environment and agricultural landscape in the county for the Iron Age and Roman period. Most of the valley and flanking limestone hills either side of the river are available for research and provide one of the few opportunities left to study a significant river valley landscape anywhere within the county. The available evidence is currently very thin but could, given the modern agricultural use of much of the landscape be well suited to modern field survey.

Second, the area also lies on an important regional divide between the traditions of Iron Age and Roman settlement and materiality seen in the East Midlands to the north and east and those of the Thames Valley to the south. Little is known of the development of later Iron Age or Roman society in this intervening zone lying as it does towards the margins of both Catuvellaunian and Dobunnian influence. With the exception of Towcester to the northeast, little is known of the development of Roman small towns in this part of the county or of the road system that accompanied it. Kings Sutton probably incorporates the intersection of routes to Towcester to the northeast and a little understood east to west route between equally poorly understood nucleated settlements at Lower Lea and Brackley/Evenley. This part of the network is in critical need of study if we are to better compare the development of urbanism and communications in the Thames valley and the East Midlands and its attendant rural landscape.

III RESEARCH AGENDA

Given the evidence above and current potential of the site the sections below outline a series of key research questions relating to the development of Kings Sutton itself. Certain wider research issues, better dealt with in relation to all the towns known from the region are considered in the project overview document.

Origins

What is the nature and date of the settlement that first develops during the Iron age? Is it a Late Pre-Roman Iron Age precursor to the roadside settlement? Are the enclosure groups seen on the aerial photographs all occupied? If so were they essentially a cluster of separate small farms as has been seen at Pennylands in Buckinghamshire (Williams 1993) or part of a more specialised or complex settlement?

Is there any substantive evidence for any military phase of activity? If so what is the nature of this occupation and where is it located? Can proper evaluation through new field walked and metal detected material provide useful information in this regard?

When is the main Roman settlement first established? Does it develop as part of a localised shift in occupation from a pre-existing important Iron Age settlement or as part of a new foundation at a road junction?

Communications

When are the through road and the main side road to Duston constructed? What are the date, nature and extent of any roads or track ways to the south of the main road? Is there any evidence to indicate the route of the road running north eastward towards Duston and the route of the through road to east and west? What is the location and nature of any crossing over the Cherwell and how did it evolve?

Urban Topography and Zonation

What were the functions of the different enclosures along the road, identified from aerial photography, through time? Is the impression that the majority of enclosures are laid out to respect the main east west road correct? If so what date are the enclosures in the centre of Blacklands field that are laid out on a different alignment?

Does domestic/craft/trading activity focus on the main through roads? What is the purpose of the track ways branching off to the south of the main road? In particular what can the integrated analysis of contextual, ecofactual and artefactual evidence from future excavation tells us about the use of space across the settlement through time? Can the evidence from the extant field walking exercises add basic information about wider patterns of functional zonation (such as the extent of manufacturing or high status/religious buildings) across the settlement? Is there any evidence at Kings Sutton for a significant religious focus within the settlement?

Landscape and Environment

Can future excavation or evaluation establish whether deposits in the immediate environment of the settlement are likely to produce valuable ecofactual data? What is the environmental potential of the areas of alluviated ground around the likely road crossing of the Cherwell? An especially valuable exercise would be to compare environmental conditions between the main road frontages (as currently indicated by the spreads of stone in the field walking survey) and enclosures peripheral to the town indicated on aerial photographs. The absence of any environmental work in the immediate hinterland of the town prevents further comparison with the neighbouring settlements but the opportunity exists in future for such work and should be taken.

Craft and Agricultural practice

To what extent was manufacture part of the economy of the town? Can the artefactual assemblages from the field walking tell us anything about the extent to which products were

manufactured within the town and if so where? Was the town a significant centre for the collection and processing of animal and plant products or partly an agricultural settlement in its own right? What secondary products, if any, were made? Was craft production organised significantly differently to smaller agricultural settlements in the region? Were enclosures towards the fringe of the town used for specialised agricultural produce, for livestock management or simply an extension of the surrounding agricultural landscape?

Religious, Ritual & Funerary

Where are the key foci for religious and burial practice within the settlement? Is the Iron Age settlement a significant ritual centre? How do local Roman burial traditions relate to evidence for belief in other parts of the province? What evidence is there within the settlement for related ritual practices associated with Roman pagan and Christian belief focused on shrines?

The Later Roman Town

What can we identify of the nature of later fourth or early fifth century occupation in the town? Possibly a focus for late/post-Roman burial, did the settlement still function as a significant craft and trading centre? Were most or even many of the buildings still occupied? Is it possible to identify the decline of the settlement during the fourth century or was its demise sudden? What is the evidence for Early-Middle Saxon occupation in the vicinity? How does the Roman settlement relate to the later Saxon territory of Kings Sutton?

IV STRATEGY

The assessment of the management and conservation priorities within the Extensive Urban Survey have been based around an assessment of levels of importance previously applied elsewhere in the county for management purposes. The grading falls into five categories:

Scheduled: nationally important remains that have statutory protection.

Unscheduled national importance: in some cases statutory protection is suggested while in others recording action may prove to be the appropriate response to threats.

County importance: Where significant archaeology is known or where it is likely but confirmation is required. Normally recording rather than preservation would be the appropriate mitigation strategy.

Local importance: where archaeology may survive but where, on present evidence investigation does not appear appropriate.

Destroyed: where the archaeology has been wholly destroyed.

White Land: Archaeology not assessed for this report.

1.0 EXISTING DESIGNATIONS

1.1 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

None of the probable settlement area is currently scheduled

1.2 Listed Buildings

1.3 Conservation Area

1.4 Registered Parks

2.0 MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

The surviving area of the settlement is of national importance. None of the probable settlement area is scheduled. Given the survival or approximately 98 percent of the area of the settlement under agricultural land urgent consideration should be given to scheduling in order to prevent gradual denudation of the monument through cultivation. Intervention should be considered on any development to the north, south and east of the settlement alongside the possibility of extending the schedule to incorporate parts of the floodplain close to the likely crossing of the river Cherwell to the west if significant archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits are noted through evaluation.

Geophysical survey, having proved valuable in delineating the extent of early quarrying at Irchester, should be used to identify the location of similar activity noted in an earlier evaluation to the east of the town in order to establish if superficial damage to deposits has been caused.

2.1 Evaluation and Recording Priorities

The above sub-sections summarise a series of research questions for the settlement but it is clear that some represent key priorities for the immediate future.

- First, is the need to assess the artefactual evidence available from Hall and Foard's surveys in order to check the only currently available significant source of dating and functional evidence for the town. Critically, can the Iron Age focus be more accurately dated and is there evidence for first century AD occupation within the roadside settlement?
- Second, is the need to better understand the development, nature and extent of occupation around the fringes of the settlement at Kings Sutton via systematic field walking and metal detector surveys of the cultivated land.
- Third, is the need to better understand the potential and state of preservation of archaeological and paleoenvironmental evidence within the settlement and in the area of the Cherwell crossing and the nature of such a crossing.
- Fourth is the critical need for geophysical survey of the town, particularly the north eastern quarter lying under temporary pasture, but also of Blacklands field itself in order to better resolve the complex relationship between the enclosures poorly defined by aerial photography.
- Fifth is the need to consider archaeological intervention in advance of any development within the known settlement area and the fields immediately adjacent to them.
- Sixth is the critical need for excavated evaluation of the survival of superficial deposits in the core area of the town to assess the potential survival of late Roman and post Roman occupation and structural evidence in general.

2.2 Conservation Priorities

Much of the core area of the settlement is under threat from cultivation and an assessment of its present and future impact on the archaeological resource should be a key concern for the future conservation of the monument. Particular consideration should be given to the need to remove core areas of the town and Iron Age settlement in Blacklands field from cultivation.

The settlement has no visual value and given the degree to which significant archaeological structures are likely to have been denuded by cultivation are unlikely to be of great amenity value if excavated.

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