



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

HERITAGE STATEMENT

ON

**LAND SOUTH OF HIGHWORTH ROAD,
FARINGDON, OXFORDSHIRE**

NGR SU 27903 94777

On behalf of

Dijksman Planning (UK) LLP

FEBRUARY 2016

REPORT FOR Dijkman Planning (UK) LLP
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SUMMARY

This document represents an investigation of the potential for archaeological remains on land to the south of Highworth Road, Faringdon, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 27903 94777). Historically Faringdon was located in Berkshire, and is an ancient parish.

Mesolithic to Bronze Age archaeology occurs sporadically in the search area, it is considered to be a low to moderate possibility that any features or finds of this date are recovered on our present knowledge. There is a moderate to high chance of Iron Age or Roman archaeology being detected as features of this date, including a Roman shrine, have been located to the southeast of the proposal site. Such sites are important heritage and cultural sites. The activity appears to be located along the spine of a ridge, which runs through the proposal site from the southeast to the northwest. There is a low chance of there being any medieval or post-medieval archaeology other than agricultural furrows.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the Report

This report was commissioned by Mr K Dijksman of Dijksman Planning (UK) LLP to be submitted as part of a planning application.

1.2 Location

The proposal site is two fields to the south of the Highworth Road, Faringdon, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 27903 94777). The site previously lay within the historic parish of Great Faringdon, which was historically sited within the Hundred of Wyfold, within the historic County of Berkshire. The proposal site is now located in Faringdon parish within the Vale of White Horse District in the modern County of Oxfordshire.

1.3 Description

The proposal site contains two adjoining roughly rectangular field orientated north northeast to south southwest. Along the north side is Highworth Road and on the east side is a modern housing development. There are fields to the south and west of the proposal site.

1.4 Geology and Topography

The site lies across a ridge and has an Ordnance Datum height of 126m to 138m.

The underlying geology on the south side of the site consists of Ampthill Clay Formation. A sedimentary Mudstone formed approximately 156 to 161 million years ago in the Jurassic Period (mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html). On the northern edge of the proposal site is the Stanford Formation; a sedimentary limestone deposit of a similar date.

1.5 Proposed Development

The proposal is for a residential development within the proposal site.

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

This section contains a historical development of the area, the known archaeology of surrounding search area, cartographic evidence, and a site visit. Some information may thus be duplicated due to this. The known archaeology is based on an adjacent Heritage Statement and a published archaeological report for a site adjacent to this one.

2.1 The Historical Development of Faringdon and Known Archaeology

The earliest evidence of activity within the vicinity of the proposal site dates to the Prehistoric period, the majority of which was revealed during an excavation prior to

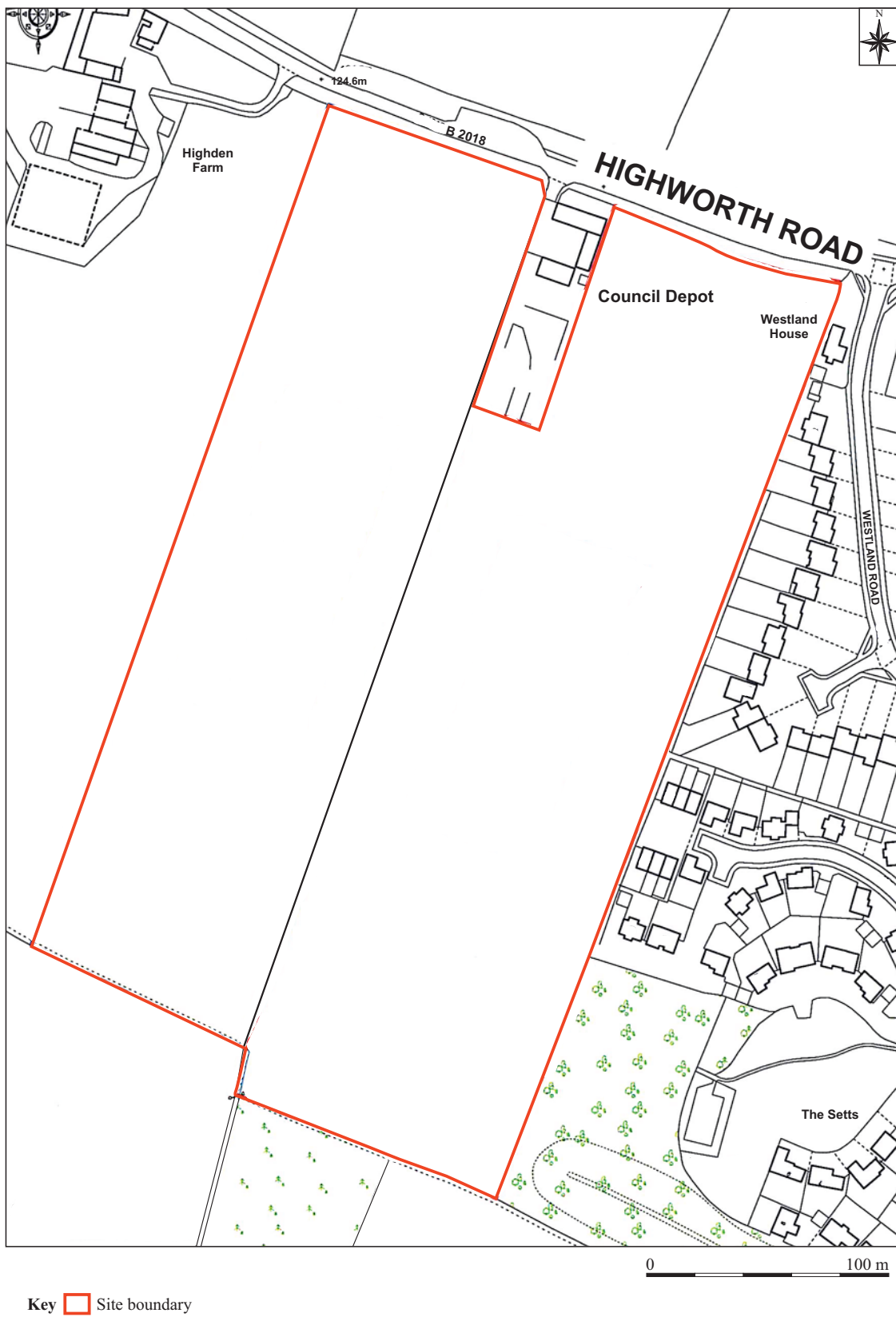


Figure 1: Site location

construction of the housing development to the east (Welbeck Land 2015, 10). The archaeology was dated from the Mesolithic to Iron Age period and consists of archaeology of domestic, small-scale industrial activity and of agricultural practices. There has also been various Prehistoric finds recorded within a wider search area, including a Neolithic Axe, Bronze Age Arrowhead and an Iron Age coin (ibid 2015, 10).

The excavations carried out prior to the latest residential development to the east of the proposal site, showed evidence of limited activity prior to the Iron Age period. However, there is significant evidence to indicate that there was a settlement established within the area during the early Iron Age period (Weaver 2004, 123). The archaeology for this phase of activity consisted of large groups of pits, a smaller number of postholes, several forming plausible structures, and a small number of ditches. The limited dates of finds recovered from the features, indicates that the settlement was limited to the early Iron Age period.

The archaeology of the area provides evidence of later settlement activity within the area in the Roman period. The evidence consists of archaeological remains identified during excavations carried out within the housing developments to the east (Weaver 2004, 132). The recorded Roman archaeology included a significant feature interpreted as a Roman period circular stone structure that operated as a probable shrine (ibid, 133).

Additionally, Roman material has been recorded within the area as being used in the construction of the cellar of the Old Crown Coaching Inn. Also Roman pottery has been recorded within Faringdon, but not associated with any Roman buildings (Welbeck Land, 11).

The earliest documented record of Faringdon is dated to 924 when Edward the Elder is recorded as dying within Faringdon (Mundy, Rodwell and Turner 1975, 117). This would indicate that Faringdon was a royal centre (VCH 1924, 489-499).

Faringdon in 1066 it is recorded as belonging to Harold II and being part of a large manor. It is also recorded that there was a palace within the settlement, most likely located close to All Saints Church (Welbeck Land 2015, 12). The lack of archaeology dated from this period would indicate that activity at this time was focused within the historic core of Faringdon, to the north east of the proposal site.

In 1086 it is noted that the manor of Faringdon was held by William I in demesne. The manor is then recorded as being held by the Bishop of Salisbury and by Alsi. By the late 12th century, the manor and associated lands of Faringdon are recorded as being let until 1204 when it was granted to the Abbey of Beaulieu. The manor was again held in demesne in the 13th and early 14th centuries and was continually leased from 1351 until it was surrendered to the crown in 1538 (VCH 1924, 489-499).

The main form of archaeology dated from the medieval period recorded within the immediate vicinity of the proposal site consists of medieval ridge and furrows (Weaver 2004, 136). During the excavation carried out to the east of the proposal site medieval pottery, mostly likely of 11th to 13th century date was recovered (Weaver 2004, 136).

Following the surrender of the manor to the crown in 1538, it continually changed ownership until 1622 when it was conveyed to Sir Robert Pye and it remained with that family until 1806 when it was sold to William Hallett. By 1847, the manor had passed to Daniel Bennett, whose trustees retained manorial rights until at least 1924 (VCH 1924, 489-499).

The archaeology indicates that there has been limited physical development within the southern part of Faringdon until the 1970s when the town expanded southwards, with the southern part of Faringdon having been used for agricultural purposes prior to the expansion (Welbeck Land 2015, 13).

2.2 Cartographic Research (Figures 2 to 4)

A series of historical maps were examined that range in date from the 18th to the 20th century. Rocque's map of 1761 shows the area as being part of a larger field with indications of strip cultivation. The 1852 Tith map (D/D1/53/1) of Faringdon parish, which depicted the proposal site as agricultural land. The map did not indicate if the land was owned and the award was not available to view.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map from 1876 (Berks 8.9) depicted the east field with no features (Fig. 2). The west field at this time is part of a larger field, but also with no features. The map did show buildings within the adjacent field to the east, with the buildings located on the adjoining border at the northeast corner of the proposal site. To the west of the proposal site, there were earthworks within a field, labelled as ring clumps, and old quarries on the north edge of Highworth road.



Figure 2: First Edition Ordnance Survey map

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map from 1899 (Berks 8.9), depicted the same arrangement as the First Edition map, with the domestic structure on the adjoining edge within an adjacent field on the east side (Fig. 3). The additional structure in the Second Edition is not depicted on the Third Edition map from 1912 (Berks 8.9). However, the Third Edition map does depict two buildings in the northwest corner of the east field (Fig. 4).



Figure 3: Second Edition Ordnance Survey map



Figure 4: Third Edition Ordnance Survey map

There are no further changes to the study site. However, the 1960 Ordnance Survey does show the extension of the urban area along Coxwell Road. Additional gravel pits have been excavated to the north and northwest of the study site.

2.3 Aerial Photographs

The only features noted on the aerial photographs are circular cropmarks to the east of the proposal site. The circular cropmarks had not been excavated, but their form would indicate that they are either Bronze Age ring ditches or Iron Age round houses. It was also noted that it appears that the cropmarks have since been quarried away.

2.4 Site Visit

A site visit was conducted in order to determine the current condition of the proposal site and if there were any additional features not previously recorded. The proposal site is a slightly overgrown pasture, with hedges and a few trees forming the boundary. The only feature noted during the visit was a possible hollow close to the northeast corner of the proposal site (Plate 1). The only buildings which directly overlook the proposal site were the modern buildings along the east side (Plate 2).



Plate 1: Possible hollow in northeast corner



Plate 2: View of modern houses from the proposal site

3 DISCUSSION

The proposed development was briefly outlined in section 1. A discussion of the heritage data was discussed in section 2 (2.1 Historical and Archaeology, 2.2 Cartographic, 2.3 Aerial Photography, and 2.4 Site Visit). Section 3.1 offers a simplified over view in a chronological overview.

3.1 The Landscape of the Area

The archaeology within the surrounding area indicates that there has been activity within the vicinity of the proposal site since the Prehistoric period. The earliest evidence of activity consists of worked flints and dates from the Mesolithic period; however, the evidence is limited and is most likely to represent casual loss. Sporadic activity continued into the Bronze Age period.

A series of excavations and evaluations, carried out prior to the construction of the southern part of the housing development on the eastern edge of the proposal site, recorded significant evidence of Iron Age activity. The evidence consists of various features, including groups of post holes and pits that have been interpreted as representing buildings of an Iron Age settlement. The finds within the settlement were limited typologically to the Early Iron Age period, therefore indicating that the settlement was limited to this time period. Further archaeological work carried out, indicates that the settlement was localised, and did not extend to the north or east. However, work within the area has not revealed the southern or western extent of the settlement. There is a lack of archaeology within the area dated to the middle or late Iron Age period.

The next phase of activity within the search area has been dated to the Roman period. The most significant feature identified within the area is a circular stone shrine on the northwest extent of the excavations carried out to the east of the proposal site. Circular shrines can be recognised amongst the Atrebates as being part of a larger shrine complex in which a larger secondary shrine lies adjacent to the complex.

After the Roman period, the activity within Faringdon appears to have been concentrated on the historic part of the town to the north of the proposal site. The area south of the town became an area of agricultural fields with few buildings with little development. This continued into the late 20th century, during which a series of residential developments began, including within the area on the eastern edge of the proposal site.

3.2 The Archaeological Potential of the Proposal Area

The potential for archaeological remains within the proposal site varies depending on the period from which the archaeology is dated. Based upon the archaeology previously recorded within the immediate vicinity of the proposal site the following can be stated. Mesolithic to Bronze Age material in the search area is sporadic; this means that there is a low to moderate possibility. There is a moderate to high potential for archaeology dating from the Iron Age and Roman period, as archaeology of these periods lie in the adjacent field. However, the fact that the area was used for agricultural purposes in the medieval to post-medieval period is indicative of there being a low to moderate chance of archaeology from these periods (other than furrows).

At present there are no known heritage assets within the proposal site; however, archaeological remains have been noted in adjacent fields. The Roman temple complex lies in an adjacent field, and this should have been treated as a significant cultural heritage. Such sites operated as places of local communal focus and cultural identity. This site was located on the spine of a ridge, and it was not determined if this lay in a larger enclosure or to the east of an enclosure.

As there have been no previous developments noted within the proposal site. Damage to potential archaeological sites in the area would have been caused by ploughing from the medieval and post-medieval periods. The hollow noted in the field may be part of a limestone quarry.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The proposal site consists of an undeveloped field on the south side of Highworth Road in Faringdon. Along the east edge of the proposal site is a modern housing development that was preceded by archaeological evaluations and excavations. The excavations revealed the presence of an Early Iron Age settlement and a circular Roman shrine. The excavation also confirmed that from the medieval period onwards, the activity within the southern part of Faringdon mainly consisted of agricultural activities. The Iron Age and Roman activity appears to be located along the spine of a ridge over which the proposed development appears to be focused.

Based on the known archaeology within the area, there is a possibility that any development within the proposal site could disturb archaeological remains of, mostly likely of Iron Age or Roman periods. These settlements appear to lie on the spine of a ridge that runs southeast to northwest through the proposal site. Archaeological

remains from any other period are considered to be low to moderate in the likely hood of there being any.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

5.1 Books and Documents

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Mundy, J., Rodwell, K. and Turner, H. 1975 *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire: A Survey of the New County*, Oxford: Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit

Victoria County History (VCH) 1924 *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 4*, London: Victoria County History

Weaver, S.D.G. and Ford, S. 2004 *An Early Iron Age Occupation Site, a Roman Shrine and Other Prehistoric Activity at Coxwell Road, Faringdon in Oxoniensia* Volume 69, Oxford: Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society

Welbeck Land 2015 *Heritage Statement: The Steeds 200, Coxwell Road, Faringdon*, Unpublished Report

5.2 Historic Maps

D/D1/53/1 1852 Tithe map of Faringdon Parish

Berks8.9 1876 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Berks8.9 1899 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map

Berks8.9 1912 Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map