Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by South Oxfordshire District Council to undertake an Historic Impact Assessment to form part of the evidence base of their emerging Local Plan. Six sites have been selected for potential future development: Berinsfield, Chalgrove Airfield, Land west of Culham Science Centre, three sites at Nettlebed, and the Oxford Brookes University Campus at Wheatley. This document provides an initial summary assessment of the potential historical and archaeological importance/sensitivity of the sites, and suggests possible mitigation strategies for any potential adverse impacts. Each site will be dealt with in turn, and each split into potential impact on the archaeological resource within the site, the setting of historic buildings within the site, and the impact on the setting of designated archaeological and historic monuments and buildings within the environs of the site. This document will be superseded by the forthcoming full report.

**Berinsfield**

This site comprises c 132 ha of agricultural land and is located immediately to the east of the modern settlement of Berinsfield. It has been indicated that virtually the whole site is currently allocated as mixed-use development. The north-eastern corner and northern periphery of the site has currently been assigned to green infrastructure (Local Plan 2033 Second Preferred Options Document, 200).

**On-Site Archaeological Impacts**

A large number of archaeological finds and features are recorded within the site and its immediate environs. These are known through cropmarks, excavation in advance of gravel extraction, and as stray finds. This includes two phases of excavation within the site. A significant prehistoric presence is known on the site, comprising Palaeolithic axes and flint scatters; Neolithic pits, a posthole circle and a burial; a Bronze Age ring-ditch, cremations and field system; and an extensive Iron Age settlement. This latter settlement continued into the Roman period, and an early medieval well has also been recorded. To the south-west of the site the nationally important Neolithic-Bronze Age Dorchester monument complex was destroyed by gravel extraction in the 20th-century, and the site is near the significant Roman and Anglo-Saxon town of Dorchester-on-Thames. Proximity to these important multi-period sites suggests that there is a high potential to contain previously unrecorded archaeological features within the site. This is in addition to the large number of archaeological sites and features already known within the site. There are no scheduled monuments, historic battlefields or registered parks and gardens within the site.

Part of RAF Mount Farm was located on the site between 1940-1957. It is likely that works associated with the construction of this airfield and related buildings truncated any earlier archaeological remains. The extent of this truncation is unknown, although it should be noted that Second World War airfields often have relatively low below-ground impact.

**On-Site Historic Building Setting Impacts**

The site does not contain any designated buildings. Existing 19th-century buildings are of limited historic interest.

**Off-Site Setting Impacts**

The village of Berinsfield, immediately adjacent to the site, dates entirely to the 20th-century. There are no designated structures within Berinsfield. Surrounding villages and the town of Dorchester contains conservation areas and listed buildings. However, none are in particularly close proximity to the site, and a consequence of the flat topography of the surrounding landscape allows the
implementation of screen planting to successfully shield views to and from the majority of designated sites.

However, this flat topography means that there are the commanding views from the prominent chalk hills of Wittenham Clumps, some 4km to the south of the site. The scheduled Iron Age hillfort of Sinodun Hill/Castle Hill is located on the eastern hill, and the site is visible from this important archaeological feature. The view towards the site from Sinodun Hill/Castle Hill is a rural landscape interrupted only by small historic villages, the Thames and adjacent lakes. Development has the potential to partially impact the setting of the scheduled hillfort.

Mitigation Strategies

There are no scheduled monuments or upstanding archaeological earthworks on the site. The high impact that development will have on the large number of known and suspected archaeological features within the site can be successfully mitigated via trial trenching followed by excavation, and preservation in situ or by record where appropriate. Any archaeological works will have to be agreed by the Oxfordshire County Archaeologist.

There are no designated assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. Historic listed structures and conservation areas in the further environs should be able to be successfully screened from the development via screen planting. A likely low impact on the setting of the scheduled Sinodun Hill/Castle Hill hillfort might be unavoidable, although further planting could partly mitigate against this.

Chalgrove

The site at Chalgrove is c. 252 ha in extent, comprising the entirety of Chalgrove airfield. It has been indicated that broadly the southern half of the site is allocated to mixed-use development, surrounded by areas of green infrastructure. The type of development proposed for the northern half of the site has not been indicated (Local Plan 2033 Second Preferred Options Document, 201).

On-Site Archaeological Impacts

No scheduled monuments or designated parks or gardens are present on the site. Upstanding archaeological earthworks pre-dating the 20th-century are not recorded, and no archaeological works have taken place within the site. A registered battlefield is present within the eastern area of the site, extending out of the site to the east.

Prehistoric activity appears not to have been intensive in the environs of the site. Slightly more Roman activity is known, but given the size of the site it is considered that there is a moderate potential for the site to contain previously unrecorded prehistoric and/or Roman archaeological finds or features.

The village of Chalgrove, immediately to the south of the site, has its origins in the medieval period. A number of medieval finds and features are known in and around the village, including coins found within the site, and earthworks immediately to the south of the site. Given the proximity of the site to these known features, it is considered that there is a moderate potential for the site to contain finds or features dating to the medieval period. It appears that these features are more likely to occur in the southern area of the site. Other medieval activity is known to the west, north and east, although known activity in these areas do not appear to extend into the site itself.

The Battle of Chalgrove took place in 1643 in an area including the eastern portion of the site. This is now a registered battlefield. No archaeological finds or features have been recorded relating to this battle, although these may exist both within and outside of the registered area. The extent that
development may impact on the setting of this battlefield also needs to be considered. Current plans have indicated that development would take place immediately to the south of the registered area; the possibility for this construction to be moved away from the battlefield should be considered.

The site was in agricultural use in the post-medieval period up to 1943 when the current airfield was built. It is likely that the construction of this truncated earlier archaeological features, although the possible extent of this is unknown. It should be noted that Second World War airfields often have relatively low below-ground impact. There is a high potential for unrecorded finds and features relating to the Second World War use of the site to be present.

*On-Site Historic Building Setting Impacts*

No listed buildings or conservation areas are within the site.

*Off-Site Setting Impacts*

The majority of the surrounding listed buildings are currently screened by planting. In common with a number of other sites in the Local Plan, the flat topography of the site and surrounding area allows for planting to be particularly effective at screening modern development from the view of historic buildings. The current indication that the development would not take place immediately adjacent to the Grade II listed Rofford Hall and associated designated barn, located just outside the site to the west, lessens the potential impact on these historic features. The listed buildings and conservation area within the village of Chalgrove are separated from the site by modern development and the B480, effectively screening further development from these assets.

*Mitigation Strategies*

No scheduled monuments are located within the site, and any potential impact upon archaeological finds and features within the site can be mitigated by an appropriate strategy of archaeological trial trenching, excavation and/or preservation *in situ*. Limiting development around the area of the registered battlefield as well as screen planting could mitigate against any impact upon the setting of this historic feature. Keeping development separate from Rofford Hall immediately to the north-west of the site as well as screen planting around key areas where viewsheds might occur between development and other historic features should successfully mitigate against any impact up the setting of historic buildings outside of the site.

*Culham*

The Culham site comprises an area of c 242 ha and is situated within a bend of the River Thames, between Culham Science Centre and the European School, north of the A415 Abingdon Road, and south of the Thames. It has been indicated that the northern area c 250-400m wide comprising the Thames valley floor and slope leading to the floodplain has been allocated for green infrastructure (Local Plan 2033 Second Preferred Options Document, 200). The implications of this proposal will be considered in the following assessment.

*On-Site Archaeological Impacts*

No archaeological investigations have taken place within the site, and there are no scheduled monuments or registered battlefields within the site. The area appears to have largely remained agricultural land since at least the 18th-century, and probably the late-medieval and post-medieval period. Previous truncation on the archaeological resource is therefore thought to be minimal.
There are two known probable archaeological sites within the proposed development area, although neither have been investigated. Cropmarks in the eastern area of the site suggest the presence of a field system and pits. It is likely that further features are associated with this complex. The full extent of this archaeological site is unknown, as the extent of the cropmarks should not be taken as a true indicator of the spread of features. The date of this complex is also unknown, although two Roman find-spots within the site near to the cropmarks and a further three find-spots in the environs of the site alongside a Roman cremation burial and possible kilns suggest that the cropmark complex might date, in part at least, to the Roman period. This date is accommodated by the morphology of the complex.

The second known probable archaeological site is a Civil War encampment, the focus of which appears to have been immediately to the west of the proposed development site on Culham Hill. However, documentary evidence suggests that the occupation might have extended into the western area of the site.

A relatively large amount of activity from virtually every prehistoric period is recorded on the gravels to the north, west and south of the site. Although there are far fewer records of prehistoric activity within the site itself, this may be due to a bias in the evidence base. The majority of the known activity is represented by either cropmarks or is related to modern gravel extraction. The different geology of the site – much of it comprising Greensand without gravel deposits – appears to have led to fewer records of prehistoric activity within the site given the lack of quarrying and the differing potential of cropmarks on this different geology. There is therefore moderate to high potential for prehistoric activity to be found within the site.

Numerous medieval settlements are known within the environs of the site, and the proximity of the important medieval centre of Abingdon suggests that there is a moderate to high potential for medieval activity to be found within the site.

On-Site Historic Building Setting Impacts

There are three designated heritage assets within the site. These are the Grade II* listed Culham Station Ticket Office and Waiting Room, the Grade II listed Culham Station Overbridge and Thame Lane Bridge, all designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel during the initial construction of the railway between Didcot and Oxford. The setting of these derives from the associated railway and other contemporary non-designated structures relating to the early railway, including the Railway Inn, Station House and other nearby buildings. Given this characterisation of the setting, it is not considered that the listed structures would be substantially impacted due to nearby development. However, if construction works included the demolition or extensions to either the listed buildings or the associated non-designated mid-19th-century buildings, or construction took place in the immediate vicinity of any of these, the historic character would be negatively affected.

The European School is Grade II listed and lies immediately to the west of the site. Construction works would negatively impact the setting of this building.

Off-Site Setting Impacts

A relatively large number of listed buildings and conservation areas are present in the environs of the site. The Grade I listed Nuneham Courtenay registered park and garden is located to the east of the site, containing Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings. The importance of this series of designated assets in part relies on the Romantic views designed by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown from the park north to Oxford, and west to Abingdon. The site is located between Nuneham Park and
Abingdon, with the potential to impact this designed view and setting of the park and associated designated assets. However, careful design and planning of the development would significantly lessen the impact this would have.

Careful design and planning would also significantly lessen the impact on conservation areas and other designated assets in the environs of the site. In particular, areas to the north and west of the site might be particularly susceptible to impact due to the topography of the site, with a ridge at the north leading down to the Thames valley floor, potentially exposing development to designated assets. However, the flat landscape to the south, with the site bounded by the partially tree-lined A415, lessens the impact of the development to areas to the south.

Mitigation Strategies

Probable known archaeological features exist within the site, and the relatively dense known prehistoric and historic settlement near the site makes it likely that previously unrecorded archaeological features exist within the site. However, there are no scheduled areas within the site, and there do not appear to be any upstanding archaeological earthworks. Therefore, impact on these assets can be mitigated by archaeological evaluation, excavation and/or preservation in situ. Any archaeological works would have to be agreed by the Oxfordshire County Archaeologist.

Designated assets within and immediately adjacent to the site relate primarily to the original construction of the Didcot-Oxford railway. If design is sympathetic to this context, works do not involve the substantial alternation of associated non-designated assets, and construction is not in the immediate vicinity of these buildings, it is not thought that the impact on the setting of these listed structures would be significant. The European School is also Grade II listed, and immediately adjacent to the site. Impact on this structure would be greater, although screen planting could help mitigate against this.

The most significant impact on a variety of designated historic features would derive from construction works in the northern area of the site. It has already been indicated that the Thames valley floor and slope leading down to this is set aside for green infrastructure, with less potential impact. It is suggested that if the area of green infrastructure was larger and included the ridge, with high impact building works ending slightly further to the south, these would not be visible from designated assets to the north and west of the site, and impact of the setting would be largely mitigated.

Nettlebed

Nettlebed comprises three relatively small sites. Site 1 is located to the north of the village of Nettlebed, on the fringes of related developed area near to a modern housing estate. Site 2 is located on the western fringes of Nettlebed village, and Site 3 comprises the house and grounds of Joyce Grove/Sue Ryder Home.

On-Site Archaeological Impacts

None of the three Nettlebed sites have been the subject to previous archaeological works, and no known archaeological features are recorded within Sites 1 and 2. Sites 1 and 2 appear to have remained agricultural since at least the 18th-century, making the likelihood of significant truncation of archaeological features within the sites unlikely. Site 3 comprises the landscaped grounds of a country house, the present house being the latest in a succession of structures. The truncation of earlier archaeological features is therefore likely to be variable across Site 3.
Records within and around Nettlebed show a significant Mesolithic presence, centred on Windmill Hill to the north-east of the centre of the village. A number of Mesolithic find-spots in the parish show that activity in this period also took place off the hill, leading to a moderate potential for previously unrecorded Mesolithic finds and features to be present within all of the three sites.

Little Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman activity is known in the vicinity of the sites, leading to an unknown-low potential for archaeological finds or features of these periods to be present.

Nettlebed had a thriving brick-making industry in the medieval and post-medieval periods. It is considered that there is a moderate potential for features relating to this activity to be present in all three of the sites.

Apart from the possibility of features relating to brick-making activity, there is nothing at present to suggest the existence of medieval or post-medieval features at Site 1. Although Site 2 is on the western edge of the current village core, the presence of the church just 130m to the east of Site 2 suggests the medieval and/or early post-medieval core of the village was further to the west centred around the church. This suggests a moderate potential of features from these periods being present in the site.

Site 3 comprises a county house and associated grounds. The current house dates to the early-20th-century, although a succession of previous houses is known to have existed. There is a high potential that the remains of these houses exist within the site, possibly being as early as the medieval period.

On-Site Historic Building Setting Impacts

There are no historic buildings within Sites 1 and 2. Site 3 comprises the house and grounds of Joyce Grove/Sue Ryder Home, a Grade II listed early-20th-century Jacobean-style manor house. The setting of the house is intimately entwined with the associated landscaped gardens, and it is thought that any significant additions within the gardens would substantially negatively impact the setting of the designated house.

Off-Site Setting Impacts

Site 1 falls outside the contiguous settlement of Nettlebed, but would form an extension to the modern Priest Close estate, removed from the historic core of the village. Extensive areas of woodland screen the site from designated assets in the environs of the site, and it is thought that development would have a low impact on the setting of historic features.

Site 2 is immediately adjacent to the western boundary of Nettlebed conservation area and near three designated assets. However, a modern petrol station is located between the site and the conservation area, and given the restricted size of Site 2 it is thought that sympatric development could have a low-moderate impact on the setting of nearby designated historic features.

Site 3 is located down a private gated drive, hidden from designated historic features within Nettlebed. Lines of mature trees or more substantial woodland areas surround the site, further screening Site 3 from designated assets within the environs. It is therefore thought development would have a low impact on the setting of nearby historic features. This section does not consider impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Joyce Grove/Sue Ryder Home within the site.

Mitigation Strategies

No scheduled monuments, battlefields or parks and gardens are located within any of the three sites. Although no archaeological features are recorded with Sites 1 and 2, the apparent lack of truncation
and known features in the environs of the sites lead to the possibility that archaeological remains are present in both sites. Appropriate archaeological trial trenching and/or excavation can successfully mitigate against impact to possible archaeological features. Any archaeological works must be agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeologist. Site 2 is immediately adjacent to Nettlebed conservation area and three associated listed buildings. Impact on the setting of these designated features could be minimised by appropriate screen planting.

Site 3 comprises the Grade II listed Joyce Grove/Sue Ryder Home and associated grounds. Impact on known archaeological features could be mitigated by appropriate archaeological trial trenching and/or excavation. However, the setting of the listed building within the site is intimately tied to the surrounding grounds, and it is not thought that impact on the setting of this could be mitigated if substantial building works were to take place.

**Wheatley**

The Wheatley site comprises c 21 ha currently in use as a campus for Oxford Brookes University. The eastern c 4 ha is currently developed with university buildings; the western remainder of the site comprises partially landscaped playing fields and includes the scheduled monument known as ‘the moated site 580m south-west of Church Farm’ approximately in the middle of the area of playing fields. It has been indicated that development would take place primarily within the area already comprising university buildings.

**On-Site Archaeological Impacts**

The HER has no records of archaeological interventions within the site. Substantial damage would have taken place to archaeological features in the currently developed eastern area; the extent of damage in the western area is unknown.

Few prehistoric features are known in the environs of the site, although more Roman activity is recorded. This suggests a moderate potential for the existence of Roman finds or features within the site.

The scheduled moated site within the area of development probably dates between the 12th-15th centuries AD. The manor appears to have moved c 1450 AD 300m to the north-west, occupying the site of the present buildings and moat of Holton House immediately outside of the area of proposed development. The lack of subsequent post-medieval buildings associated with the original manor leads to the likelihood that archaeological remains are well preserved both within the scheduled area and outside the moat itself. However, landscaping works associated with creating the present playing fields may have truncated and/or buried archaeological remains. The extent of this possible damage is unknown. A possible post-medieval quarry and limekiln is also recorded within the area of the moat, although the existence of this is very uncertain.

**On-Site Historic Building Setting Impacts**

There are no listed buildings within the site or other structures deemed to have historic interest. Appropriate building recording may, however, be necessary prior to any demolition.

**Off-Site Setting Impacts**

Designated assets that could be negatively impacted by disrupting the historic setting are primarily the scheduled moated site of Holton House and associated listed buildings, located immediately to the north-west of the site. The impact on designated historic features to the north and south of the site would be less, and easier to rectify given appropriate screening. The historic setting of Holton
House derives from the context provided by associated assets, its predominantly rural/village location, and its immediate proximity of the earlier phase of manor house, represented by the moat within the site. Development near the moat within the proposed development site would substantially impact the setting of Holton House and associated designated assets.

Mitigation Strategies

Initial plans indicate that significantly intrusive development would largely only take place within the area already occupied by university buildings. Assuming development only stretches a little further to the west of these current buildings, impact on potential archaeological features would likely be insignificant due to probable extensive previous truncation by the current university buildings. However, appropriate trial trenching, excavation and/or watching brief work might be necessary and would have to be agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeologist. The replacement of the current buildings with smaller structures has the potential to lessen the impact on the setting of designated assets within the site and its environs. Some screen planting may be appropriate on the boundary of the site.

If development were to take place in the area currently occupied by playing fields, it is thought that there would be a substantial impact on archaeological features associated with the scheduled moat, as well as on the setting of this monument and designated assets to the north-west of the site. It is unlikely that any development proposal that runs the risk of directly impacting upon the scheduled monument would be permitted. It is not thought that screening or other techniques could successfully mitigate against significant impact on setting if development were to take place in the central or western part of the site.

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