

BERKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

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11th October 2024

Planning CONSULTATION RESPONSE – Application 242421 School Road Arborfield Cross

Thank you for consulting Berkshire Archaeology regarding the above application. Berkshire Archaeology is part of Reading Borough Council's Museum and Town Hall Services and provides historic environment advice to the five unitary authorities of Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council. This response relates solely to buried archaeological heritage, the Council's Conservation Officer should be consulted for any matters relating to the historic built environment.

There are potential archaeological implications with this proposed development as demonstrated by Berkshire Archaeology's Historic Environment Record. Little archaeological work has been carried out in the immediate vicinity of the proposal site and as such it's potential is largely unexplored, however extensive work in the wider area have uncovered Prehistoric activity and occupations sites, such as the Iron Age/Romano-British settlement site just under c.1km southwest at Arborfield Cross relief road. Additionally crop marks on aerial photography show undated enclosures c.600m north of the site. The application was accompanied by a Desk Based Assessment which noted that there was potential for Prehistoric or Medieval rural activity in the area, along with the results of geophysical survey which were inconclusive.

Early mitigation, prior to reserved matters, is recommended which would permit any archaeology found to inform on the design details of this development.

As shown, the application site falls within an area of archaeological significance and archaeological remains may be damaged by ground disturbance for the proposed development. It is therefore recommended that the following condition is applied, should permission be granted, in order to mitigate the impacts of development. This is in accordance with Paragraph 211 of the NPPF(2023) which states that local planning authorities should '*require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible*'.

Condition:

- A) No development shall take place/commence until a programme of archaeological work, including a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to, and approved by, the local planning authority in writing.**

The WSI shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:

1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
2. The programme for post investigation assessment
3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation
6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the WSI.

B) The Development shall take place in accordance with the WSI approved under condition (A).

The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason:

The site lies in an area of archaeological potential, particularly for, but not limited to, Prehistoric and Medieval remains. The potential impacts of the development can be mitigated through a programme of archaeological work. This is in accordance with national and local plan policy.

The proposed development will significantly impact any below ground archaeology. In view of the nature and scale of the development and the low likelihood of the potential archaeology, should it exist, meriting preservation in situ, field evaluation through trial trenching would represent an appropriate initial phase of work in order to determine the archaeological potential, levels of previous truncation, and the need for any further phases of work.

It is advised that this should be completed prior to submission of reserved matters.

Berkshire Archaeology would be pleased to discuss the approach with the applicant, or their archaeological consultant, should permission be granted.

Linden Ellicott
Archaeology Officer