

114-119 St Aldates/4-5 Queen St, Oxford

Outline Methodology for Archaeological Works

Introduction

This document outlines the broad methodology to be adopted to mitigate the impact on archaeological remains arising out of proposed development (planning reference 14/02256/FUL). It forms a part of the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) required by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The archaeological works are designed to comply with and allow discharge of (draft) conditions 9 and 10.

Condition 9

No development (including site clearance) shall take place until a detailed design for foundations; other ground-works; intrusive landscaping; and a method statement for their construction in areas of archaeological potential; have been approved in writing by the local planning authority. The method statement shall be expressed in terms that commit the developer to compliance unless otherwise agreed in writing by the planning authority.

Condition 10

Post-demolition no development shall proceed until the developer has:

1. Carried out an archaeological evaluation of the site in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved in writing by the local planning authority and;
2. Secured the implementation of a scheme of mitigation of any significant archaeological impact, which may be achieved by redesign, or by archaeological recording action in accordance with a supplementary written scheme of investigation, to be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Archaeological Desk-based Assessment (CgMs 2014a) and the Addenda to that assessment (CgMs 2014b) attached to this document as Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. Together, these documents, submitted in support of the planning application, describe the known and potential archaeological remains on the site, identify the potential impact of the proposed development on those remains, and outline a strategy to mitigate that impact. As a result the Oxford City Archaeologist has recommended that the scheme can proceed subject to conditions requiring further archaeological investigation.

In addition, further documents will be produced comprising:

- A detailed foundation and groundworks design to specify the type and location of works and the methodology for their construction (see condition 9)
- A detailed WSI to specify the scope scale and methodology for an archaeological evaluation of areas to be affected by the construction works (see condition 10)
- A detailed WSI to specify the scope, scale and methodology for any detailed investigative works that may be required, following evaluation, to mitigate construction impact (see condition 10)

General impact of construction on archaeological remains

The proposal affect land at 4/5 Queen Street and 114/115 St Aldates Oxford, although only construction works in land to the rear of Queen Street have the potential to cause significant disturbance to archaeological remains. In properties fronting St Aldates existing basements will be retained with no or only very limited construction impact below this level. Any archaeological remains that survive will be preserved in situ. Along the Queen Street frontage the existing basements will also be retained, although it proposed that some piling will take place here. Piling will be designed to be minimal impact with pile caps inserted above the level of archaeological remains.

As such, the areas of highest archaeological importance, comprising potential remains of Saxon and Medieval buildings fronting on to two of Oxford's main thoroughfares, will suffer no or only very limited disturbance. This strategy of promoting preservation in-situ of important archaeological remains follows national and local policy and guidance.

An area to the rear of properties fronting Queen Street will be subject to excavation for a new basement, below existing levels, with the potential to disturb archaeological remains (see Appendix 2). These remains, should they have survived previous development of the site, are likely to comprise backyards attached to the properties fronting Queen Street and may preserve important evidence for the use of the street frontage properties. This area will provide the focus for archaeological evaluation and, if required, subsequent detailed investigation (see below).

Demolition, foundation design and construction methodology

A detailed methodology for demolition and construction has yet to be finalised although the following broad methodology is proposed.

Those elements of the existing standing building that will not be retained will be demolished to the level of the existing ground floor/basement slab as appropriate. Some limited removal of slab and existing footings will take place to enable piling.

The new build will be constructed on a piled foundation, with pile caps and ground beams. Once demolition is complete the site will be filled with crushed material, over the retained basement slab, to provide a stable piling mat from which piling will be undertaken. Once piling is complete this material will be removed and the ground will then be reduced to the new basement level. Construction will proceed from this new formation level.

In order to discharge (draft) condition 9 it is intended to submit to the City Council a detailed foundation design and construction method statement prior to the start of demolition works.

Archaeological works

It is proposed to undertake archaeological works on site in two phases to ensure compliance and discharge of (draft) condition 10.

Phase 1 Evaluation

In part discharge of (draft) condition 10, and in order to test the survival of archaeological remains, their location, condition and significance, it is proposed to undertake Phase 1 Evaluation, comprising

a number of test trenches/pits (to be specified within a WSI agreed by the LPA). These works will take place prior to demolition, and will be located in areas where construction impact will take place, specifically to the rear of Queen Street. The results of the work will be submitted to the LPA and will be used to (a) agree any changes to the foundation design and construction methodology (possibly to further promote preservation of important remains), and (b) to agree the scope and scale of any further detailed investigation.

Phase 2 Detailed investigations

Should evaluation confirm the location of significant archaeological remains that cannot be preserved in situ then a programme of detailed pre-construction investigation will be undertaken (to be specified within a WSI agreed by the LPA). This would likely involve excavation and recording of archaeological remains to the rear of Queen Street, after the removal of the piling matt (to be confirmed), but prior to the construction of pile caps, ground beams and the insertion of services. The surviving basement slabs and any recent make up/obstructions would be removed under archaeological supervision with archaeological excavation undertaken to the depth of formation for the new build. Any archaeological remains below this depth would be considered for protection and retained in situ.

Watching brief

As noted above, the evaluation and detailed investigation works will be focussed on the area to the south of Queen Street. Across the remainder of the site only limited groundworks are proposed beneath existing levels. Where these do occur, for services, etc. an archaeological watching brief will be maintained to ensure the recording of any archaeological remains that are exposed. The scope and scale of the watching brief will become clearer when detailed foundation and construction plans are available and be specified within a WSI agreed with the LPA.

Reporting and archiving

In addition to the WSI's, a number of reports will be issued during the project as follows:

- Phase 1 Evaluation report
- Phase 2 Detailed investigation interim results and post-excavation assessment report
- Draft Publication report
- Final publication report

The format of these reports will be specified within the WSI's.

The records and artefacts and other data generated by the projects will be subject to appropriate analysis as agreed with the LPA and specified within the post-excavation assessment report leading to publication/dissemination of the results.

The records and artefacts will be deposited with an appropriate publically accessible local archive.

Standards and monitoring

All works will be undertaken in compliance with the standards and guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). Other standards and guidance specific to period or data types will

be referenced within the WSI's as appropriate. The works will be managed on behalf of the developer by historic environment consultants CgMs who are a Registered Archaeological Organisation (RAO) with ClfA and have been involved as part of the design team from the start of the project. Fieldwork and reporting will be undertaken by a sub-contractor who will also have RAO status (to be appointed). Throughout the fieldwork and reporting works will be monitored by the City Archaeologist on behalf of the LPA.

Public outreach

The archaeological works are taking place in the centre of Oxford and there will be considerable public interest. As part of the WSI for Phase 2 detailed investigations proposals will be included to allow public access to the on-going works as far as possible given the constraints of a commercial construction site.

Appendix 1 Archaeological Desk-based Assessment

Appendix 2: Addenda to Archaeological DBA September 2014