Warren Creek, The Warren, Caversham, Reading

Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief

Planning Reference… <not available yet>

Document Reference… 3863 - Archaeology WSI Rev A

Date… October 2024

1 Background

1.1 With climate change becoming an ever-present challenge, the owners of Warren Creek are becoming increasingly nervous about the safety of their home. In January 2024 the main house was 1.5cm from having water running in the front door. They are looking to build a new home further north and further away from the Thames. The plan includes the removal of the current dwelling. The proposal will sit on stilts with limited excavation and foundations.

1.2 There are potential archaeological implications for the site. It lies on the river floodplains of the Thames, in an area known to have archaeological potential. Reading Museum records show there is evidence of palaeolithic hand axes found in The Warren.

1.3 The development is considered small, the area has historically had restricted access as it was separated from the road by a 4m wide creek and the area shows no signs of having been previously developed (other than the existing house that was made possible through the building of a footbridge). However, there is some potential for finds.

1.4 This Written Scheme of Investigation details how archaeological rigor will be ensured through the appointment of a “Qualified Oversight” (detailed below, sections 2.3 and 2.4) with sole accountability for archaeological oversight, investigation, artefact management and documentation following standard good practice.

2 Outline Ambition

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) 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'. The site falls within an area of archaeological significance and archaeological remains may exist.

2.2 In line with Condition 14, "No development, excepting demolition to ground level, shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title have secured the implementation of a phased scheme of archaeological works (which may comprise more than one phase of works) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition".

2.3 In advance of any work below ground beginning, the 'Qualified Oversight' will be appointed and will remain in place for the duration of excavation work, through to write up and project closure.

2.4 The Qualified Oversight will be a Company or individual suitably qualified to carry out such work following WSI guidance.

3 Aim

3.1 The aim (or purpose) of the watching brief, as defined in the CIfA Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (CIfA 2014a), are to:

i allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;

ii provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not standard; and sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

4 Objectives

4.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the watching brief are to:

i determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;

ii record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);

iii should anything of significance be found, to put in place appropriate governance, and process to ensure it is appropriately investigated, identified, protected and preserved.

5 Fieldwork Methods

5.1 All works will follow WSI guidance

All below ground work during both the build and the demolition is in scope.

5.2 Monitoring

i The watching brief will be overseen by the "Qualified Oversight". Digging is expected to be very minimal as the new build is based on narrow, deep stilts. Any excavation will be kept to a minimum with mechanical equipment that minimises damage.

ii The Qualified Oversight will have the right to ask for work to be stopped for pauses with limited disruption to allow further investigation.

5.3 Recording and surveying

All exposed archaeological deposits and features will be surveyed and recorded at the time of finding using standard, structured good practice and will include photographic evidence.

5.4 Monitoring oversight

i The client will inform the Berkshire Archaeology (info@berkshirearchaeology.org.uk / 0118 937 5976) when work begins and will not restrict or hamper access to the site by archeologic specialists.

ii In the event of discovery of any human remains, all excavation will be stopped with immediate effect until a Ministry of Justice licence is secured. Further work will follow the Ministry of Justice guidance.

iii In the event of treasure being found, Berkshire Archaeology will be informed immediately and further work will follow protocol and method found in the Treasure Act 1996.

6 POST-EXCAVATION METHODS AND REPORTING

6.1 Reporting

Following completion of the fieldwork a draft report will be submitted for approval to the client and Berkshire Archaeology (info@berkshirearchaeology.org.uk / 0118 937 5976) for comment. Once approved, a final version will be submitted.

6.2 Escalation

The likelihood of a find is considered low. Should notable artefacts be discovered the Qualified Oversight will consult with Berkshire Archaeology in areas such as publication, archiving, indexing and transfer of title.