Preliminary archaeological assessment of land within Colchester Borough proposed for Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community

1.1 This is a preliminary assessment of the archaeological potential of land within Colchester Borough pertinent to this scheme. Also included is advice on the likely level of archaeological information that will be required to support a Cultural Heritage chapter for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

1.2 The proposed development site is circa 134 ha on the Colchester side, incorporating a local nature reserve, arable/pastoral land and parkland.

2. Archaeological Background

2.1 This is an area of some archaeological sensitivity. Within the site boundary are complexes of cropmarks indicative of archaeological remains. These occur specifically in the north east of the site (between Thousand Acres wood and Slough Lane; Colchester Historic Environment Record no. 4809), in the centre and east (around Wivenhoe New Park; CHER nos. 6938, 8995 & 9010), and in the south west (between Clingoe Hill Wood and Salary Brook; CHER nos. 7103 & 8976), and were identified from historic aerial photography by the National Mapping Programme (NMP) in the 1990s and 2000s. However, a review of Google satellite imagery from 2018 indicates probable ditched archaeology of a density beyond that mapped by the NMP, throughout much of the site. Dense enclosures are visible between Home Wood and Salary Brook, with more enclosures between The Strip and Thousand Acres. From its morphology, much of this ditched archaeology is likely to be Late Iron Age/Romano-British in date.

2.2 Archaeological work has taken place within the site, specifically a fieldwalking survey followed by the excavation of one trial trench in the far south west, beside Salary Brook and to the north of Clingoe Hill. Roman pottery, and large quantities of Roman/post medieval brick and tile were recovered during fieldwalking, suggesting the presence of buildings close by in the Roman and post-medieval periods. The trial trench revealed three undated pits (CHER ECC4391).

2.3 The Victoria County History for Colchester suggests the presence of a 12th century watermill, Greenstead Mill, on Salary Brook, within the site (CHER no. 2843). If remains of this survive they could be of high significance.

2.4 A probable World War II anti-tank ditch runs through the far west of the site, from north to south (CHER no. 5222).

2.5 Outside the boundaries of the site to the south west, at the point where Salary Brook joins the River Colne, are the remains of at least five Bronze Age barrows (CHER no. 3043). Three were visible as upstanding earthworks in 2003, and two have been investigated by archaeological trenches. One was identified in a trench as Bronze

Age in origin, but re-used in the Iron Age or Roman periods, while the second feature appeared to have been destroyed by recent activity.

2.6 Extensive archaeological evaluation and excavation has taken place at the University of Essex, immediately to the south of the A133/St Andrew's Avenue, revealing ditches, pits, postholes and human burials of Late Iron Age and Roman date (CHER nos. 3103, 9328 & 10072). Remains of a small medieval farmstead were also identified.

2.7 Directly to the southwest of the site, between Elmstead Road and St Andrew's Avenue, significant medieval remains were revealed in 2018 (CHER no. 3051). Specifically, numerous ditches and pits were identified, containing large quantities of 11th to 16th century pottery, tile and brick, a belt buckle, a knife blade, and other artefacts.

3. Assessment of archaeological potential

3.1 The cropmarks identified within the proposed development site suggest a continuation of the kind of archaeology identified to the south of the A133, notably quite dense settlement and agricultural activity dating from the Late Iron Age/Roman period and/or the medieval period. Archaeological remains from other periods may also be present, given the proximity of the barrow cemetery to the south west. Much of this land is topographically prominent, and overlooking natural water sources, which may increase its archaeological potential.

3.2 Given available information the site can be assessed as having a moderate to high potential for below ground heritage assets dating to the Late Iron Age/Roman period, a moderate to high potential for medieval remains, and a moderate potential for prehistoric remains. Similarly a low to moderate potential for Saxon archaeology, and a moderate to high potential for post-medieval remains (notably field boundaries) can be assumed given available information.

4. Initial stages of archaeological assessment

4.1 The following archaeological information will be required by the Local Planning Authority to support the Cultural Heritage chapter of the proposed Environmental Statement (ES):

- An archaeological desk-based assessment incorporating an up-to-date aerial/cropmark assessment.
- A report on a geophysical survey of the proposed development site.

- A report on an archaeological trial-trenched evaluation of the proposed development site.

4.2 Please note that these pieces of evaluative work will need to be completed prior to the submission of any planning application if the results are to be incorporated into the ES. A brief for this work can be obtained from the archaeological advisor to Colchester Borough Council.

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