APPENDIX 3

PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING THE VALUE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Appraisal

It is usually in a prospective developer's own interests to look ahead, and, in considering the development potential of a site before deciding to make a planning application, to carry out an initial appraisal to establish whether it is known or likely to contain archaeological remains.

The first step will be to contact the County Archaeological Officer in the County Planning Department. The County Sites and Monuments Records provide information about the locations where archaeological remains are known or thought likely to exist, and full use should be made of the expertise available. English Heritage should also be consulted where the setting of an Ancient Monument, Listed Building or Conservation Area is likely to be affected.

Assessment

The initial appraisal will help to provide prospective developers with advance warning of the archaeological potential of a site. As a result, they may wish to commission their own archaeological assessment by a professional archaeological organisation or consultant.

Assessment normally involves the desk based study of existing records such as aerial photographs, historic maps, or archaeological reports. Some rapid field reconnaissance work may be required to ascertain land use or locate surviving evidence of archaeological sites. Ideally, an archaeological assessment report should be submitted in support of a planning application.

Evaluation

Where early discussions with the County Archaeological Officer or the developer's own research indicate that significant archaeological remains may exist, the District Council will ask the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. Evaluation is quite distinct from full excavation, involving survey work such as geophysical survey or field walking, and small scale trial trenching.

Evaluations help to define the character and extent or archaeological remains that survive in the application area, and thus indicate the weight which ought to be attached to preservation. They also provide useful information on ground conditions, and for identifying potential options for minimising or

avoiding damage such as amended foundation design. On this basis, an informed and reasonable planning decision can be taken.

Mitigation

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in situ. There will be occasions, particularly where remains of lesser importance are involved, when the District Council may decide that the significance of the remains is not sufficient when weighed against all other material considerations, including the need for development, to justify their preservation.

The District Council will wish to be sure, before granting planning permission, that the developer has made satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of archaeological remains. Such excavation and recording should be carried out before development commences, working to a project brief prepared by the Council and taking advice from archaeological consultants. The subsequent publication of the results of the excavation should also be included in these mitigation works.

If mitigation has not already been secured through some form of voluntary agreement such as a Section 106 Agreement, permission may be granted subject to conditions which provide for the excavation and recording of remains. It is open to the District Council to secure archaeological investigation and recording through the use of a negative condition prohibiting the carrying out of development until such time as archaeological excavation has been carried out, or to ensure that a “watching brief” is undertaken specifically to carry out archaeological investigations during the course of permitted operations on site.