

ARCHAEOLOGY STATEMENT

Rocks Lane Multi Sports Centre

The Archaeological Priority Area (APA) covers the western area of Barn Elms Playing Fields and Barnes Common. Prehistoric finds have been discovered within these areas of unenclosed public common and parkland. There is a separate APA for the riverside area of Barn Elms Playing Field. The APA is classified as Tier 2 because it is an area of historic landscape that has remained largely undeveloped with a history of positive archaeological interventions. It falls within a favourable topographic and geological location covering the confluence of the Thames and Beverley Brook and the Thames foreshore where there is potential for the survival of organic remains

Description Barnes Common, Mill Hill is a large area of unenclosed common land in the Urban District Council of Barnes. It adjoins Putney Lower Common to the east and Barnes Green to the north-west, and Barn Elms Playing Fields to the north. It is a designated Conservation Area and Local Nature reserve with one of the largest areas of open acid grassland within Greater London. Prior to draining in c.1880 the common was mainly marshland, it is now largely woodland, coppice, and heathland with some open areas of grass used for cricket. The common is criss-crossed by track ways, paths, roads, a railway line and the Beverley Brook forming a series of undeveloped open spaces. On the highest ground and at the centre of the common an isolated cluster of Victorian houses stands over the site of a 15th Century mill. The Beverley Brook passes through the APA to the north of Barnes Old Cemetery and to the south of Barnes Elms Playing Fields where the remains of a possible medieval moated manor and later Georgian Manor House are thought to be preserved below ground.

Lying close to the foreshore and covering the confluence of the Thames and Beverley Brook the area would have been a favourable location for settlement in the prehistoric period. Evidence for prehistoric human activity has been recovered throughout the APA with significant finds concentrated within Barn Elms along the line of the Thames where several archaeological interventions have taken place. Evidence of activity in the earlier periods include Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic long blades, Neolithic flint arrowheads, implements and a possible Neolithic flint working area 65 within Barnes Common. Isolated Mesolithic to Bronze Age artefacts have been encountered within the confluence of the Thames, Beverley Brook, Thames Channel and Thames foreshore area. Important prehistoric finds have also been discovered along the Putney Riverside and Putney Common to the south of the APA. Including a site at 38-46 Sefton Street thought to have been occupied during the Neolithic period where more than 2400 Mesolithic and Neolithic flint flakes were recovered, as well as pottery, post holes and two hearths.

Excavations in Barn Elms at the Thames/Beverley Brook confluence and along and adjacent to the foreshore from 1974 until the present day have revealed evidence of a significant Iron Age occupation and settlement covered by the Tier 1 Barn Elms Riverside APA. There is a lack

of evidence of Roman settlement in low ground areas such as Richmond, this may relate to natural factors such as drainage and soil type. During the Roman period the area lay in marshland that was prone to flooding and unsuitable for settlement. As such Roman activity is limited to scattered isolated finds including a concentration of Roman tile circa 25 metres upstream of the mouth of the Beverley Brook. However, the area to west of Putney Bridge approximately 900 metres south-east of the APA probably hosted the main area of Roman settlement it is likely that the Beverley Brook would have provided an ideal transport route towards the inland. A Romano-British or Late Iron Age cinerary urn with cremated bones was found immediately below the modern surface in a light depression visible on aerial photographs and Lidar survey data to the south of Mill Hill Road.

The Rocks Lane Multi Sports Centre is located in the Tier 2 of the APA (see appendix A). The proposed padel tennis courts are to be located on the site of existing tennis courts and will not require any excavation or resurfacing and, therefore, cannot have any impact on the APA.