

## 1. Summary

### Development Stage 2A1: 2A0061/5.2/FH (Charbridge Lane) Flood Alleviation Area at Land East of Bicester Road, Oxfordshire

#### *Site Details*

<b>Development Stage</b>	2A1
<b>Site Name</b>	2A0061/5.2/FH (Charbridge Lane)
<b>Type of Works</b>	Flood Alleviation Area
<b>Proposed Archaeological Works</b>	Watching Brief
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	SP 60250 23302 (centred)
<b>Site Area</b>	1.5 ha (14,745m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Chainage</b>	108600 to 108900
<b>Land Use</b>	Arable cultivation
<b>Local Planning Authority</b>	Cherwell District Council
<b>Curator</b>	Oxfordshire County Council; Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist ( <a href="mailto:archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk">archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a> or 07917 001026)

#### *Proposed Archaeological Investigation*

Archaeological monitoring will involve the observation, investigation and recording during construction works associated with the creation of a flood alleviation scheme. It is important to stress the main contractor's method of working will not be directly controlled for archaeological purposes, unless important archaeological discoveries are found (in which case the site method may change to Construction Integrated Recording<sup>1</sup>). All work will be carried out by the Contractor in accordance with national, regional and local policy and guidelines, and in conjunction with the Heritage Delivery Strategy<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Previous Archaeological Works*

N/A

<sup>1</sup> EWR Alliance, 2019a. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*. Unpublished Report. Section 6.6

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

### *Archaeological Potential*

<b>Potential</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Type of remains likely to be encountered</b>
High	Post Medieval	Agricultural remains
Medium	Iron Age	Settlement; field systems
	Romano-British	Settlement; field systems
	Medieval	Industrial remains e.g. milling, remains of an agricultural nature e.g. ridge & furrow; field system; finds associated with manuring
Low	Palaeolithic	Flint scatters
	Mesolithic	Lithic scatters
	Neolithic	Lithic scatters; settlement
	Bronze Age	Settlement; ceremonial
	Early Medieval	Field systems; settlement
	Modern	Agricultural remains

## 2. Introduction

This document is a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) setting out a methodology for an archaeological watching brief during works at a flood alleviation area at 2A0061/5.2/FH (Charbridge Lane) ('the Site'). The Site is highlighted within the 'Specific Sites requiring Written Schemes of Investigation' section of the Heritage Delivery Strategy as requiring a WSI for these archaeological works<sup>3</sup>.

The Site is located within Development Stage 2A1 of the EWR2 scheme (centred on NGR Ref: SP 60250 23302). The Site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of land of approximately 1.5ha located at the eastern edge of Bicester. The Site is currently in use for arable cultivation and is enclosed by mature trees and hedgerows. Within the wider area, the Site is surrounded by agricultural land, with commercial properties to the west. The Site lies within the local authority administrative area of Cherwell District Council.

Topographically, the Site occupies a broadly flat portion of land, at approximately 70m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The Site has an underlying bedrock geology composed of the Kellaways Sand Member - Sandstone and Siltstone, interbedded which between 166.1 and 163.5 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. No superficial deposits are recorded at the Site<sup>4</sup>.

The Site is required for flood alleviation. The exact scope of works has yet to be fully determined; however, the Site will be completely stripped of topsoil will require excavation of the underlying subsoil to varying depths across the site. The extent of the intrusive works thus means that archaeological mitigation within the Site is required.

## 3. Key Potential

### *Prehistoric (500,000BC – AD43)*

There is an absence of evidence for Palaeolithic activity in the vicinity of the Site; evidence for Palaeolithic activity within the gravel terraces of the River Cherwell to the east of Bicester is sparse, possibly due to the natural geology of the area where alluvial deposits may mask the presence of early prehistoric remains<sup>5</sup>. Evidence of Palaeolithic activity within the Site, if present, is likely to comprise artefactual or palaeoenvironmental remains within deeper deposits. There is also no evidence for Mesolithic activity in the vicinity of the Site however lithic scatters have been found in archaeological investigations near Bicester. There is deemed to be Low potential for remains of these dates to survive on the Site.

No evidence for Neolithic activity is recorded close to the Site. The absence of known Neolithic sites may be a result of limited archaeological investigation rather than limited activity during this period. The potential for Neolithic remains to be encountered is judged to be unknown.

Despite a wealth of Bronze Age settlement and burial evidence to the west and south of Bicester, there is no evidence of Bronze Age activity in proximity of the Site. This may be due to a lack of archaeological investigation in the area; much of the Bronze Age evidence around Bicester has been identified in recent years as part of archaeological works related to suburban residential development and the A421 Chesterton Lane Overpass/Wendlebury-Bicester Dualling<sup>6</sup>. There is thus some potential for further Bronze Age remains to be encountered within the Site.

<sup>3</sup>EWR Alliance, 2019. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*. Unpublished Report Section 8, Table 8.1 Page 8-8

<sup>4</sup> British Geological Survey Website, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Hardaker, T. (2014) The Lower and Middle Palaeolithic of Oxfordshire. In Hey, G and J, Hinds (eds) *Solent-Thames Research Framework*; Hey, G. 2014. Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic: Resource Assessment. In G. Hey, and J. Hind, (eds) *Solent-Thames Research Framework*

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Oxfordshire had been subject to extensive woodland clearance carried out by the Middle/Late Iron Age, with environmental data corroborating the rise in open grassland environments<sup>7</sup>. Iron Age enclosed settlement and land management is observable in the surrounding area. An archaeological evaluation of Compound A1 to the immediate south of the Site revealed Late Iron Age/Romano British features thought to be related to land management and agricultural activity. The remains are thought to be peripheral domestic remains associated with a concentration of activity to the south; which consist of, the remains of a Late Iron Age farmstead, field system and well (MOX23494) recorded approximately 900m south of the Site during works associated with the Bicester Park development<sup>8</sup>. Late Iron Age pottery (MOX12667) was also recovered from a modern ditch c. 300 m to the south of the Site in 2002. There is High potential for Iron Age remains.

#### *Romano-British (AD43 – AD410)*

The high frequency of Romano-British activity recorded surrounding Alchester to the south of the Site and in the vicinity of the Site suggests high potential for remains of this date. Dispersed rural settlement has been encountered beyond the limits of the major Romano-British centres such as Alchester in the region of Oxfordshire and along the 2A EWR route. Remains to the south of the Site were found in 2002 during an excavation at Bicester Perimeter Road, c. 300m from the Site (MOX12667; SMR Ref: 16540). A ditch and posthole were recorded which contained bone and Iron Age and Romano-British pottery. Further Late Iron Age to Romano-British evidence was then encountered in 2004, c. 900m south of the Site (MOX23494; SMR Ref: 26122). A farmstead and field system dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD was excavated with trackways and field ditches as well as two wells. In 2019, during trial trenching at Compound A1 located immediately to the south of the Site, features dated to the Iron Age/Romano British period were identified. These comprised ditches, pits and spread containing ceramic material and are likely related to land management or agricultural activity e.g. land divisions; fields and paddocks. The spread of isolated features revealed no cohesive plan or field system and this activity is likely to be peripheral to a focus of Iron Age/Roman domestic activity thought to be located further to the south<sup>9</sup>.

#### *Early Medieval (AD410 – AD1066)*

The Site lies directly to the east of Bicester with the modern settlement of Bicester evolving either side of a ford over the River Bure, close to the Saxon Minster of St Edburg's. The first group of farms were established in the vicinity of what became the Manor of King's End followed by a later settlement on the east side of the Bure which became the Manor of Market End<sup>10</sup>. However, no early medieval remains are recorded in the vicinity of the Site. It is likely that the Site was located within open or agricultural land beyond the limits of settlement. There is deemed to be Low potential for early medieval remains.

#### *Late Medieval (AD1066 – AD1540)*

A probable windmill mound (MOX5020), thought to be of medieval date, is recorded c. 130m south-west of the Site suggesting industrial activity in the area. There are also visible remnants of ridge and furrow in the surrounding fields (MOX24816; MOX12722) and similar medieval ploughing activity is likely to have taken place within the Site itself. The Site is likely to have been part of the larger medieval landscape surrounding the settlement of Launton, including further evidence of ridge and furrow and the deserted medieval settlement at Wretchwick, 2km to the south-west, There is considered a Medium potential for Late Medieval agricultural remains to be encountered within the Site.

<sup>7</sup> Lambrick, G. (2014) The Later Bronze Age and Iron Age: Resource assessment. In G. Hey, and J. Hind, (eds) *Solent-Thames Research Framework*

<sup>8</sup> Northamptonshire Archaeology. 2004. *Bicester Park Phase 4, Archaeological Excavation, Assessment and Updated Project Design*. Unpublished report.

<sup>9</sup> EWR Alliance, 2019b. *Compound A1: Land East of Bicester Road, Oxfordshire: An Archaeological Evaluation Report*. Unpublished report.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

### *Post-Medieval (AD1540 – c.1750) and Industrial Period (c.1750 – 1901)*

The Site is located c.1.5km east of the historic core of Bicester and at the start of the post-medieval period the area surrounding the Site was still predominantly rural and the pattern of open-field cultivation prevailed. Although small enclosures of pasture appear to have been granted in the fourteenth century, a two-field system of cultivation endured until at least the end of the sixteenth century<sup>11</sup>.

Prior to the Inclosure Acts and Commons Acts of 1773 to 1882, the process of enclosure within the area appears to have been predominantly piecemeal, with the earliest example of which can be seen at Launton. The enclosures led to the loss of open fields system and associated common land, and the creation of the regular, rectilinear field systems. By the early 19th century, the process was largely complete. Bicester is a market town formed from the coalescence of three, originally separate, settlements - King's End, Market End and Crockwell - the social standing and architectural character of each of these settlements being noticeably different, reflecting their separate social histories<sup>12</sup>. The form of the town settlement is very much dictated by the presence of the River Bure and from examination of historic maps can be seen to have changed little throughout post-medieval to modern period. It is only in the later decades of the 20th century that the town underwent rapid expansion with the construction of successive waves of housing estates in-filling and around the periphery of the historic core.

### *Modern Period (Post-1901)*

As part of the modern development and expansion of Bicester, modern and larger road schemes replace earlier routes and new industrial parks are created to the west and north. The only areas with remaining open fields are to the east and northeast. There are no recorded modern heritage assets within the Site.

### *Historic Landscape Character*

The Oxfordshire Historic Land Characterisation shows the Site to lie within an area of enclosure open field system, reorganised through the addition of a railway line. The line of the London and North Western Railway (MOX5870) runs 300m to the south of the Site and was opened in 1850. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1878 shows the Site as enclosed fields, presumably in use for agriculture.

## 4. Previous Works

No previous archaeological investigative work has been undertaken within the Site.

## 5. Proposal for Archaeological Investigations

The proposed programme of works at Flood Alleviation Area 2A1: 2A0061/5.2/FH will initially involve a programme of archaeological monitoring. All works will follow the specific methodologies set out in Section 6 of the Heritage Delivery Strategy<sup>13</sup>:

- 6.5 Archaeological Monitoring
- 6.6 Construction Integrated Recording
- 6.7 Chance Finds Procedure
- 6.9 Environmental Sampling

<sup>11</sup> VCH, 1959. 'Parishes: Launton', in A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 6, ed. Mary D Lobel (London, 1959), pp. 232-243

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> EWR Alliance, 2019. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*. Unpublished Report

- 6.10 Human Remains
- 6.11 Finds
- 6.12 Recording & Reporting
- 6.13 Archiving

Where archaeological remains are encountered, further mitigation may be required. This will be discussed and agreed between the Contractor, the Employer and the Curator.

## 6. Site in the Context of the Research Agenda

Iron Age and Romano-British remains have been found to the immediate south of the Site and while these remains appear to be peripheral to settlement activity further to the south, there is potential for further remains of Iron Age and Romano-British land management to be found within the Site. With the remains of known ridge and furrow in proximity to the Site, there is considered to be a Medium potential for medieval remains and High potential for post-medieval remains to survive on the Site. The potential for encountering hitherto unknown remains of other periods is less but cannot be ruled out.

The Heritage Delivery Strategy outlines the Specific Research Objectives (SROs) that the work on EWR2 may address. Where remains of Iron Age settlement or agriculture are encountered within the Site, they may have the potential to contribute to:

- **SRO09:** What is the evidence for pre-Iron Age phases of enclosure, and to what extent were Iron Age and Romano-British field systems and settlement influenced by earlier structuring of the landscape?
- **SRO10:** Can we identify regional patterns in the form, location and status of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements across the route, and are there associated differences in landscape organisation and enclosure? Further, can we detect a decline in mobile domestic activity as the period progressed?

If Romano-British features are encountered within the Site, they may have the potential to contribute to:

- **SRO18:** Can we investigate continuity of local traditions by excavating sites with well-preserved deposits of both Late Iron Age and Roman date?
- **SRO19:** Can we study more Roman settlement types?
- **SRO25:** Identify evidence for late Roman occupation and attempt to identify any continuity in settlement patterns between the end of the Romano-British period and the Early Medieval period.

Where remains of medieval ridge and furrow or settlement are encountered within the Site, they may have the potential to contribute to:

- **SRO29:** Understand the chronology of development and character of later medieval field systems and their relationship to settlement across the region
- **SRO30:** Better understand the character and organisation of later medieval ridge and furrow and field systems
- **SRO37:** Can we understand better the extent of medieval industrial activity and the relationship between agricultural practices and estates e.g. milling.

The ability of any other remains which might be encountered to contribute to the established regional and sub-regional research framework<sup>14</sup> and the SRO's would be dependent upon the nature, condition, extent and significance of the remains. Any such remains, however, could have the potential to

<sup>14</sup> Hey, G. and Hind, J., 2014. Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas. Oxford Wessex Monograph Series.



contribute to and/or further the understanding the patterns of land use, settlement and/or economy of the period to which they belong. Should hitherto unknown remains be encountered during archaeological monitoring, they should be considered in the context of Section 4 of Heritage Delivery Strategy and Solent-Thames Framework, or any successor document.

## 7. Bibliography

British Geological Survey Website, 2019. *Geology of Britain Viewer*. URL: [www.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain). Date accessed: December 2019.

Domesday Book Online, 2019 URL: <https://opendomesday.org/>. Date accessed: December 2019

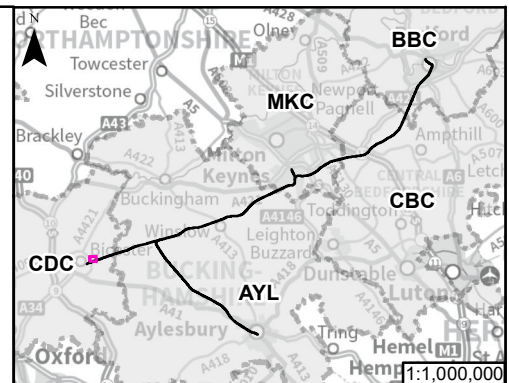
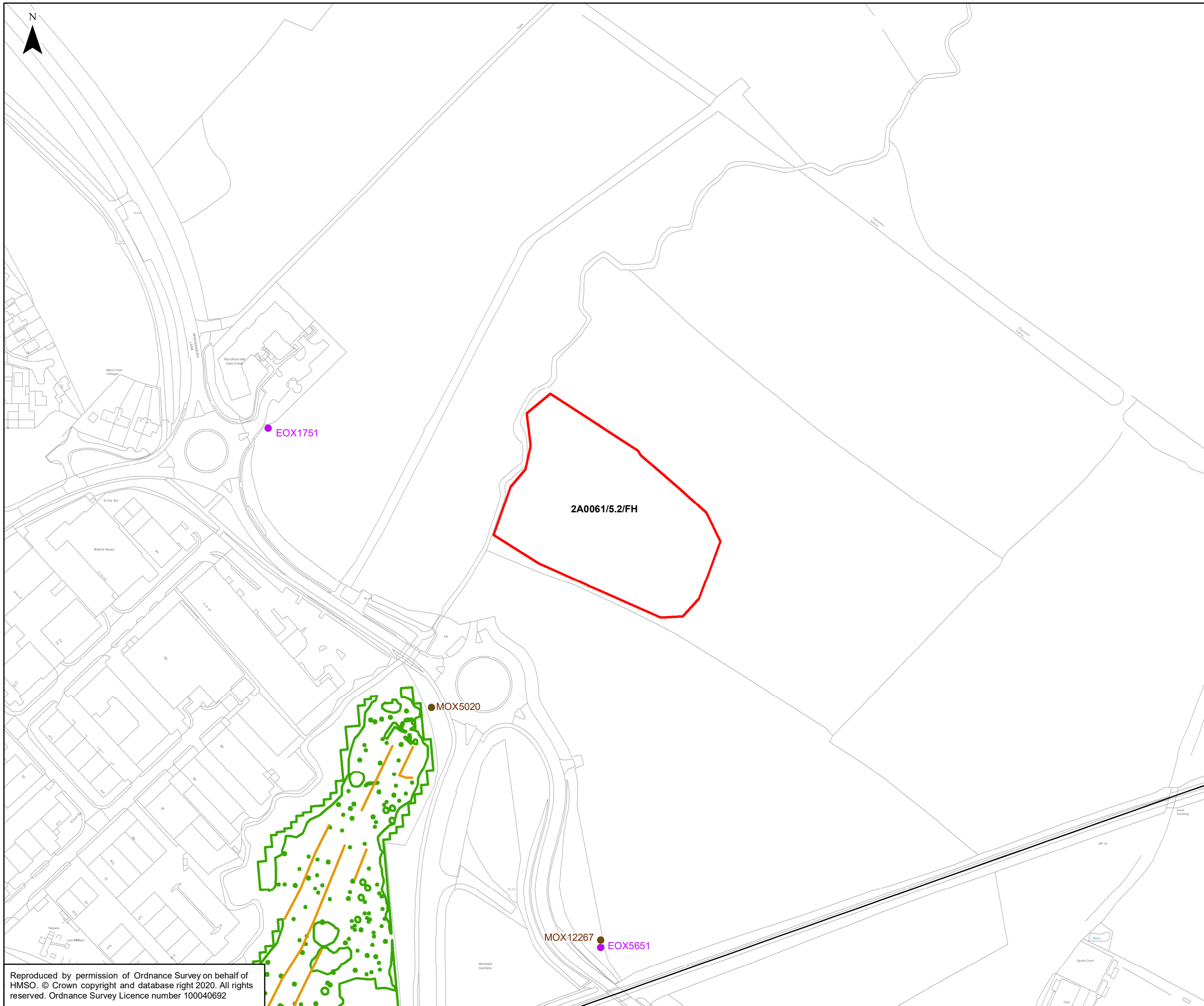
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- PROJECT EXTENTS
- - - LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY
- ▭ SITE
- EVENT
- MONUMENT
- GEOPHYSICAL INTERPRETATION LINE
- ▭ GEOPHYSICAL INTERPRETATION BORDER



P01	26/02/20	FIRST ISSUE	KP	KS	AFM
Rev	Date	Description of Revisions	Dsnd	Chkd	Appr
Status				Suitability	
PUBLISHED-STAGE APPROVED				A1	



Project  
**THE NETWORK RAIL (EAST WEST RAIL BICESTER TO BEDFORD IMPROVEMENTS) ORDER**

Drawing Title  
**FIGURE 2A0061/5.2/FH FLOOD ALLEVIATION AREA, CHARBRIDGE LANE**

Designed	Krithika S Patwardhan	Signed	<i>Krithika S Patwardhan</i>	Date	26/02/2020
Drawn	Krithika S Patwardhan	Signed	<i>Krithika S Patwardhan</i>	Date	26/02/2020
Checked	Kelvin Snell	Signed	<i>Kelvin Snell</i>	Date	26/02/2020
Approved	Amy Farrington McCabe	Signed	<i>Amy Farrington McCabe</i>	Date	26/02/2020

Scale(s)  
**1:2,500** ELR & Project Chainage  
 N/A

Design Package Risk Classification  
**NORMAL** Sheet  
 1 of 1

Alternative Reference  
**Alternative\_Ref** Revision  
**P01**

Drawing Number  
**133735\_RW-EWR-XX-XX-DR-LH-010732**

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