



Land West of Chesterton, Oxfordshire

**Written Scheme of Investigation for an
Archaeological Evaluation**

Prepared for:

Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd
Windrush Court
Suite J
Abingdon Business Park
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 1SY

Prepared by:

Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
SALISBURY
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

www.wessexarch.co.uk

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Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) has been commissioned by Taylor Wimpey (UK) Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation on at land to the west of Chesterton in Oxfordshire (**Figure 1**), hereafter “the Site” (NGR 455775 221400).

1.1.2 It is proposed that the Site be developed as a residential development. A planning application (**Planning Application No. 14/01737/OUT**) has been submitted to Cherwell District Council regarding the development.

1.1.3 The Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), acting as the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has placed the site within an area of archaeological interest and recommended that a staged programme of archaeological investigation be undertaken ahead of any development on the Site. Two conditions, relating to archaeology have been attached to the planning permission, which are;

- a. Prior to any demolition on the site, the commencement of the development and any archaeological investigation, a professional archaeological organisation acceptable to the Local Planning Authority shall prepare a first stage archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation, relating to the application area, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON – To safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological importance on the site in accordance with Policy BE6 of the South East Plan 2009 and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

- b. Prior to any demolition on the site, the commencement of the development and following the approval of the first stage Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in condition [a], a programme of archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording of the application area shall be carried out by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved first stage Written Scheme of Investigation.

REASON – In order to determine the extent, character and significance of the surviving remains of archaeological interest and to safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological importance on the site in accordance with Policy BE6 of the South East Plan 2009 and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.



1.1.4 This document sets out the methodologies and standards that will be employed by Wessex Archaeology in order to undertake the archaeological evaluation and will be submitted to and approved by the Planning Archaeologist at OCC prior to fieldwork commencing.

1.2 Scope of document

1.2.1 This WSI sets out the strategy and methodology by which WA will implement the archaeological evaluation. In format and content it conforms with current best practice and to the guidance outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE, English Heritage 2006) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2014a).

1.3 Site location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The Site is located on the western edge of Chesterton in Oxfordshire at NGR 455775 221400 (**Figure 1**). The Site is bounded to the north-west by an unnamed road which connects Green Lane to the A4095. Immediately to the south-west is an arable field and residential housing to the south and south-east. To the north and north-east are allotments and beyond this, the northern part of Chesterton village.

1.3.2 The Site comprises of two fields, referred to as 'Field 1' and 'Field 2' (**Figure 1**). Field 1 is the north-eastern field and is under pastoral cultivation. Field 2 is the larger field to the south-west and is under arable cultivation. The fields are separated by a fence line and hedgerows bound the Site apart from the north-eastern boundary.

1.3.3 The land is set on a very gentle south-east facing slope at a height around 78 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to 75 m aOD. The nearest watercourse is the Gagle Brook which lies c.400 m to the north and east.

1.3.4 The bedrock geology mapped on the Site is Cornbrash Limestone Formation. There are no superficial deposits recorded on the Site (BGS 2015).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A detailed archaeological desk-based assessment for the Site was carried out in April 2014 (CSa 2014) which concluded that there was a potential for buried archaeology of Roman date on the Site. A geophysical survey of the Site was recommended to allow for an informed decision to be made regarding future archaeological mitigation works on the Site (CSa 2014).

2.1.2 A detailed magnetometer geophysical survey was carried out on the Site in April 2014 (AS 2014). The results indicate the presence of cut features of archaeological potential in the form of a large rectilinear enclosure and linear ditch. The survey also revealed several other linear and discrete anomalies which have been interpreted as possible archaeological features (**Figure 1**). Field 1 in the north-eastern part of the Site contains widespread magnetic debris which may have affected the identification of linear and discrete anomalies in the survey area.

2.1.3 The following information on the archaeological background is derived from the archaeological assessment (CSa 2014), the OHER and the OCC Planning Archaeologist's comments, in response to consultation on the development proposal for application 14/01737/OUT.



2.1 Prehistoric and Romano-British

- 2.1.1 Two contiguous circles with a raised central area located c.1 km to the north-east of the Site are visible on aerial photographs. These features may represent Bronze Age ring ditches (MOX5629).
- 2.1.2 The Site is located in an area of archaeological potential with the Roman Road of Akeman Street (MOX1783) situated c.0.1 km south of the Site where Green Lane is now situated (**Figure 1**). Akeman Street connected Alchester to Cirencester. Alchester is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM OX18) and is situated c. 1.4 km to the south-east of the Site.
- 2.1.3 A hoard of late Roman coins was recorded c.0.7 km to the south-west of the Site (MOX11297) which suggest there may have been a Roman villa or settlement nearby.
- 2.1.4 Roman activity has been recorded along the route of Akeman Street. A trackway and system of rectilinear enclosures visible on aerial photographs have been recorded immediately to the south of Akeman Street, c. 1.5 km to the south-east of the Site and probably represent an extramural settlement to the Roman Alchester (Monument No. 933034).
- 2.1.5 Aerial photographs indicate a possible large Roman rectilinear enclosure with possible interior enclosure and pits c.0.5 km to the south-west of the Site (MOX2682).
- 2.1.6 The size, form and location of the rectilinear enclosure and linear identified in the geophysical survey on the Site (AS 2014) thus indicate that these anomalies possibly represent Roman or Iron Age settlement activity. The anomalies are also visible as cropmarks in a photograph taken in 1994 and on modern Google mapping (CSa 2014).

2.2 Saxon and medieval

- 2.2.1 An archaeological watching brief investigation c.0.5 km to the east of the Site revealed an Anglo-Saxon to early medieval rubbish pit and ditch (MOX23847).
- 2.2.2 The Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) of Bignall and the ruins of a medieval chapel are located c.0.7 km to the north of the Site (MOX5586).

2.3 Post-medieval and modern

- 2.3.1 The post-medieval site of Manor Farm Mill is situated to the south-east of Chesterton village (MOX5459).

3 AIMS

3.1 General aims and objectives

- 3.1.1 The aims of the archaeological field evaluation are to:
- *Clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be impacted by development;*
 - *Identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character and condition of any surviving remains within the Site;*
 - *Assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits;*



- *Produce a report which will present the results of the evaluation in sufficient detail to allow an informed decision to be made concerning the Site's archaeological potential and future mitigation, if appropriate.*

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Service location

4.1.1 The Client will provide information regarding the presence of any below/above ground services. Before excavation commences, the areas of proposed trenching will be walked over and inspected to visually identify, where possible, the location of above and below ground services.

4.1.2 All evaluation trench locations will be scanned by trained WA staff before and during excavation with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) in order to verify the absence of any live underground services.

4.3 Fieldwork methodology

4.3.1 All works will be undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out within this WSI and in compliance with the standards outlined in the ClfA's *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (ClfA 2014a), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.

4.3.2 A total of nine machine-excavated trial trenches each measuring 30m x 2m, are proposed in the area of development as shown on **Figure 1**. The trenches cover a total area of 540 m² and represent a 2% sample area of the development site. The trenches are targeted on the results of the geophysical survey (AS 2014).

4.3.3 All trenches will be laid out using a Global Navigational Satellite System GNSS working to a 3D accuracy of below 3 cm, in general accordance with the pattern given in **Figure 1**. Minor adjustments to the layout may be required to take account of any on site constraints such as power lines, trees or hedges. The trench location will be tied in to the Ordnance Survey.

4.3.4 The trial trenches will be excavated using a 360° excavator equipped with a toothless bucket and under constant supervision by WA. Machine excavation will be under the instruction of the monitoring archaeologist and proceed in spits, c.5-20 cm at a time. Upon reaching the archaeological horizon or the natural, the machine is moved back and the process repeated. If appropriate, hand cleaning will be undertaken to establish the nature of the deposits.

4.1.3 Trenches completed to the satisfaction of the Client and the Planning Archaeologist for OCC will be backfilled using the excavated material in the approximate order in which they were excavated by Wessex Archaeology and left level on completion. No other reinstatement or surface treatment will be undertaken.

4.3.6 Once the level of archaeological deposits has been exposed by machine, archaeological features will generally be sampled sufficiently to address the aims of the evaluation, and recorded to professionally accepted standards.

4.3.7 Spoil derived from hand-excavated archaeological features will be visually scanned and metal-detected as appropriate by trained archaeological personnel for the purposes of finds retrieval.



- 4.3.8 In the event of the identification of an exceptional number and/or complexity of archaeological deposits, sample excavation will be more circumspect and will aim to be minimally intrusive. Excavation will, however, be sufficient to resolve the principal aims of the evaluation and to a level agreed with the Client and the Planning Archaeologist.
- 4.3.9 Where complex archaeological stratification is encountered, deposits will be left *in situ* and alternative measures to assess the depth of this stratification agreed with the Planning Archaeologist.
- 4.3.10 Where modern features are seen to truncate the archaeological stratification, and where practicable, these will be carefully removed without damage to surrounding deposits to enable the depth of stratification to be assessed.

4.4 Monitoring

- 4.4.1 WA will inform the Planning Archaeologist of the commencement of fieldwork and the progress of the investigations on the Site.
- 4.4.2 Reasonable access to the Site will be arranged for representatives of OCC who may wish to make Site visits to inspect and monitor the archaeological investigations as they progress.
- 4.4.3 Variations to the WSI will be agreed in advance with representatives of the Client and Oxfordshire County Council.

4.5 Recording

- 4.5.1 All exposed archaeological deposits will be recorded using WA's *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.5.2 A complete drawn record of excavated archaeological features and deposits will be compiled. This will include both plans and sections, drawn to appropriate scales (1:20 for plans, 1:10 for sections), and with reference to a site grid tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels will be calculated and plans/sections will be annotated with OD heights.
- 4.5.3 A photographic record will be maintained during the evaluation using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images will be subject to managed quality control and curation processes which will embed appropriate metadata within the image and ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Appropriate strategies for the recovery of artefacts and environmental samples will be devised and implemented by WA's Finds and Environmental Specialists and where appropriate the Historic England Scientific Advisor.

5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 All artefacts from excavated contexts will be retained, except those from features or deposits of obviously modern date. In such circumstances, sufficient artefacts will be retained in order to elucidate the date and/or function of the feature or deposit.



- 5.2.2 Excavated spoil will be visually scanned for artefacts. A suitable metal detector may be used to enhance artefact recovery of spoil derived from hand-excavated archaeological features. Trench areas and spoil heaps from excavation will be examined. Tree throw holes and geological features will not be detected.
- 5.2.3 All retained artefacts will, as a minimum, be collected, processed, sorted, quantified, recorded, labelled, packed and stored in accordance with the requirements of the agreed repository. The treatment of artefacts and environmental samples will be in accordance with the ClfA's *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b).
- 5.2.4 All artefacts recovered during the excavations on the Site are the property of the landowner. They are to be suitably bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, *Conservation Guidelines no. 2*.
- 5.2.5 Excavated spoil will be examined for artefacts and these will be retained and recorded except for material of a modern date which will be noted but not retained.
- 5.2.6 Contingency will be made for external specialist advice and conservation needs on site should unexpected, unusual or extremely fragile and delicate objects be recovered. X-raying and storing of metalwork and other delicate objects will be undertaken by WA in-house conservation staff, the staff of the Conservation Service, Wiltshire History Centre, Chippenham or other appropriate approved conservation centres.
- 5.3 Environmental sampling**
- 5.3.1 Environmental sampling will be undertaken in accordance with WA's *Guidelines for Environmental Sampling* along with policies outlined in the ClfA's Standard and Guidance documents and *Environmental Archaeology; A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation (second edition)* (English Heritage 2011).
- 5.3.2 Bulk environmental soil samples for plant macro fossils, small animal bones and other small artefacts will be taken from appropriate well-sealed and dated/datable archaeological contexts. Samples of 40 litres will be taken or 100% of smaller contexts. Samples will not be taken from the intersection of features.
- 5.3.3 The residues and sieved fractions of the bulk environmental soil samples will be recorded and retained with the project archive.
- 5.3.4 For deposits where anaerobic preservation is identified, 20 litre bulk samples will be collected for the retrieval of uncharred plant macrofossils and insects. Specialist samples may also be taken from dry or waterlogged contexts. Such samples will target recovery of pollen (using monolith tins), molluscs, foraminifera, parasites and insects. Larger samples (80-100 litres) will be extracted wholesale from deposits rich in marine molluscs and large mammal bones. As a general rule waterlogged wood specimens will be recorded in detail in their original location. In all instances deposits with clear intrusive material shall be avoided.
- 5.4 Human remains**
- 5.4.1 In the event of discovery of any human remains (articulated or disarticulated, cremated or unburnt), a Ministry of Justice Licence will be obtained by Wessex Archaeology prior to any further disturbance (including where remains are to be left *in situ*).



- 5.4.2 Initially the remains will be left *in situ*, covered and protected, pending discussions between the Client, WA osteoarchaeologist and the Planning Archaeologist regarding the need for and appropriateness of their excavation/removal or sampling as part of the works. Where deemed appropriate, the human remains will be fully recorded, excavated and removed from the Site in compliance with the Ministry of Justice Licence.
- 5.4.3 Should human remains require removal, all excavation and post-excavation will be in accordance with WA protocols, and undertaken in-line with current guidance documents and the standards set out in ClfA Technical Paper 13 *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed remains*. Appropriate specialist guidance/site visits will be undertaken if required.
- 5.4.4 The final deposition of human remains subsequent to the appropriate level of osteological analysis and other specialist sampling/examinations will follow the requirements set out in the Ministry of Justice Licence.
- 5.5 **Treasure**
- 5.5.1 WA will notify the client and Planning Archaeologist immediately if material is recovered considered to be covered by the *Treasure Act* 1996. All necessary information required by the *Treasure Act* (i.e. finder, location, material, date, associated items etc.) will be reported to the County Coroner within 24 hours.

6 POST-EXCAVATION AND REPORTING

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 On completion of the fieldwork, appropriate processing, sampling and an assessment of all artefacts and ecofacts will be undertaken. Within four weeks of completion of fieldwork a draft evaluation report will be prepared and submitted for approval to the Client and the Planning Archaeologist. Once approved, bound copies will be forwarded to the Planning Archaeologist. Should human remains be identified and excavated, reporting will take longer to complete to enable appropriate analysis to be undertaken.
- 6.1.2 The evaluation report will be prepared in accordance with the guidance given in the ClfA's *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Evaluation* (ClfA 2014a).
- 6.1.3 Particular emphasis will be given to placing the results of the evaluation into the context of the archaeology of the area and include a statement on the archaeological significance of the results.
- 6.1.4 The evaluation report will comply with the requirements of the Planning Archaeologist, and in any case include:
- *A non-technical summary;*
 - *Introductory statements;*
 - *The aims and methods used in the evaluation;*
 - *Methodology;*
 - *Results and conclusions;*
 - *Recommendations on the potential further stages of archaeological mitigation;*
 - *Site-specific research questions arising from the evaluation results with reference to the archaeological background;*



- *Plans and index to and location of digital archive.*

- 6.1.5 WA shall retain full copyright of the client report under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the Client for the use of the report by the Client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the specification.
- 6.1.6 The information will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (OHER) where it can be freely copied without reference to WA for the purposes of archaeological research or Development Control within the planning process.
- 6.1.7 If considered appropriate, a short report on the results of the programme of archaeological recording will be prepared for publication in an appropriate national journal.
- 6.1.8 Details of the Site will be submitted online to the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations) database. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service ArchSearch catalogue.
- 6.1.9 On completion of the project, the results will be related to the relevant known archaeological information held in the OHER.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

7.1 Museum

- 7.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the evaluation be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Resource Centre. An accession number for the project will be sought prior to fieldwork commencing.
- 7.1.2 Deposition of any finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

7.2 Preparation of archive

- 7.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, artefacts, ecofacts and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by the local museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014b; Brown 2011; ADS 2013).
- 7.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the site/accession code, and a full index will be prepared.

7.3 Discard policy

- 7.3.1 Wessex Archaeology follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal* (Society of Museum Archaeologists 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis. Any discard of artefacts will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 7.3.2 The discard of environmental remains and samples follows nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1993; 1995; English Heritage 2002).



7.4 Security copy

- 7.4.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

7.5 Quality assurance procedures

- 7.5.1 WA is an ISO 9001 accredited organisation (certificate number FS 606559), confirming the operation of a Quality Management System which complies with the requirements of ISO 9001:2008 – covering professional archaeological and heritage advice and services. The award of the ISO 9001 certificate, independently audited by the British Standards Institution (BSI), demonstrates Wessex Archaeology's commitment to providing quality heritage services to our clients. ISO (the International Organisation for Standardisation) is the most recognised standards body in the world, helping to drive excellence and continuous improvement within businesses.
- 7.5.2 WA operates a Project Management system. Projects are assigned to individual managers who monitor their progress and quality, and control budgets from inception to completion, in all aspects including Health and Safety etc. Projects are managed in accordance with English Heritage guidelines outlined in the document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE, English Heritage 2006). At all stages the manager will carefully assess and monitor performance of staff and adherence to objectives, timetables and budgets, while the manager's performance is monitored in turn by the Regional Manager who will ensure that the project meets WA's quality standards and is adequately programmed and resourced within WA's portfolio of project commitments. A formal written report is made to the Executive Management Group once a month by the Regional Manager.
- 7.5.3 The work will be directed in the field by an appropriately experienced archaeologist who will normally be a member of the ClfA's and a core member of WA's staff. Overall project supervision and monitoring will be undertaken by a Project Manager based in Salisbury who will undertake monitoring visits if and when appropriate. Monitoring visits may also be undertaken by WA's Health and Safety Manager in conjunction with a representative of Wiltshire's Historic Environment team where required.
- 7.5.4 WA is registered as an archaeological organisation with the ClfA. WA endorses the *Code of Practice* of the ClfA.

8 INSURANCE AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

8.1 Policy and risk assessment

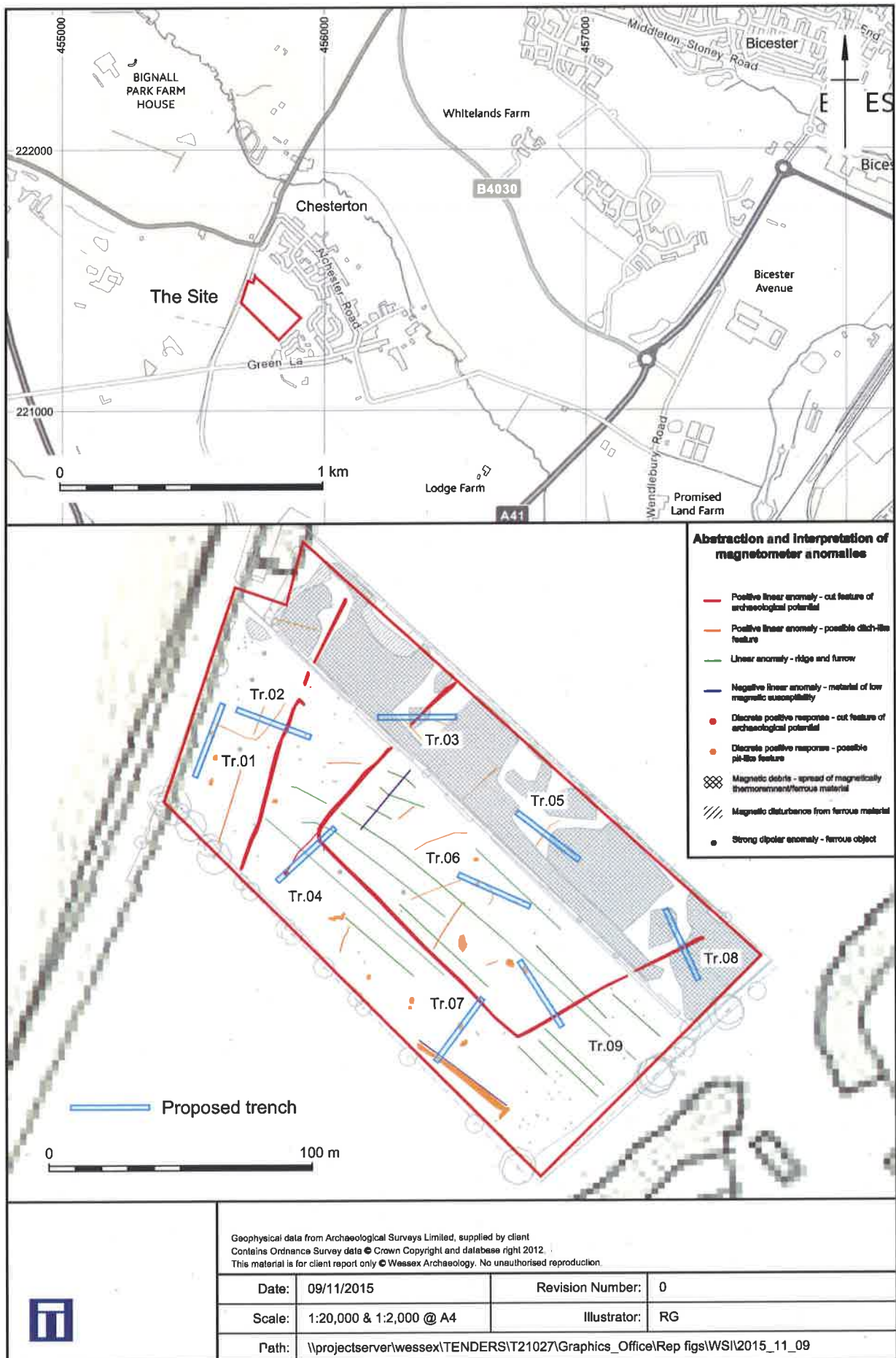
- 8.1.1 Health and Safety considerations will be of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practises will override archaeological considerations at all times.
- 8.1.2 All work will be carried out in accordance with the *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* and the *Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992*, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.
- 8.1.3 WA will supply a copy of their Health and Safety Policy and a Risk Assessment to the Client before the commencement of any fieldwork. The Risk Assessment will have been read and understood by all staff attending the Site before any groundwork commences.



- 8.1.4 WA has both public liability (£10,000,000) and professional indemnity insurance (£5,000,000).

9 REFERENCES

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Site location, proposed trench locations and geophysical survey results

Figure 1

