



Symmetry Park, Ardley

**Written Scheme of
Investigation**

Prepared by:
**The Environmental Dimension
Partnership Ltd**

On behalf of:
Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd

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- Appendix EDP 1 Illustrative Masterplan (SGP Architects and Masterplanners)
- Appendix EDP 2 Consultation Response from Victoria Green, the Council's Advisor
(September-December 2023)
- Appendix EDP 3 Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action
(Victoria Green, December 2023)

PLANS

- Plan EDP 1: Locations of Archaeological Works - Archaeological Results
(edp2355_d053 12 January 2024 VMS/EBR)
- Plan EDP 2: Locations of Archaeological Works - Development Proposals
(edp2355_d054b 20 March 2024 VMS/EBR)
- Plan EDP 3: Locations of Archaeological Works - Phased Approach
(edp2355_d055b 20 March 2024 VMS/EBR)
- Plan EDP 4: Locations of Archaeological Work – Phased Approach (Archaeological Data)
(edp2355_d056 01 February 2024 PDr/RSk)

Section 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd (hereafter referred to as 'the Client'), for review and approval by the Oxfordshire County Council's County Archaeological Services (OCAS) in their capacity as advisors to Cherwell District Council (CDC) who are the Local Planning Authority (LPA). It relates to the development of land at Symmetry Park, Ardley, Oxfordshire (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').
- 1.2 The Site is subject to a planning application within Cherwell District. The proposals seek Outline planning permission (all matters reserved) for the erection of buildings comprising logistics (Use Class B8) and ancillary office (Use Class E(g)(i)) floorspace. A full description of the proposal is provided in the Environmental Statement that accompanies the application at Chapter 3. A plan showing the Site layout is included at **Appendix EDP 1**.
- 1.3 This WSI has been produced to accompany the submission in response to consultation with OCAS, whereby an approach for further archaeological evaluation and mitigation was agreed. It is anticipated that the archaeological works proposed in this WSI, will be secured and delivered through a condition of any planning permission.
- 1.4 Consultation with OCAS took place between September and December 2023. Emails documenting this consultation are included at **Appendix EDP 2**. Subsequently, in December 2023 a Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action was issued by OCAS which provides an outline framework for this WSI. This brief is included at **Appendix EDP 3**.
- 1.5 In summary, the archaeological approach set out in the WSI will comprise:
- Additional archaeological trial trenching to further evaluate the Site;
 - Archaeological excavation to mitigate the loss of known areas of archaeological interest in parts of the Site that are proposed for development;
 - Any further archaeological works to mitigate the loss of previously unrecorded remains of archaeological interest, should these be found by the additional trial trenching; and
 - Any further archaeological works to mitigate the loss of remains of archaeological interest located at the edge of the excavation area as a contingency to the main works, should these be required.
- 1.6 This WSI sets out the scope of the works, the methodology to be employed and the possible phasing of the archaeological work. Ahead of the commencement of each phase the appointed archaeological contractor will produce a Method Statement that will supplement the information contained within the WSI.

Section 2

The Site and Archaeological Background

LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

- 2.1 The Site is located to the immediate east of the junction between the A43 and B4100, and 0.5km to the east/north-east of Junction 10 of the M40 near Ardley, Oxfordshire.
- 2.2 The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 455362, 229178 and its location is shown on **Plan EDP 1**.
- 2.3 The Site (c.79.99 hectares (ha)) comprises two land parcels, the larger being located north of the B4100 road, and the smaller located to the south. These two land parcels are comprised of eight agricultural, arable fields which are defined by field boundaries and hedgerows. The surrounding landscape is generally low-lying agricultural land.
- 2.4 The nearest settlement is Stoke Lyne, approximately 873m east of the Site. Ardley/Fewcott is located about 1.2km south-west and Fritwell is located c.2km to the west, both of which are beyond the M40.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.5 The underlying geology within the Site comprises limestone sedimentary bedrock of the White Limestone Formation, with Forest Marble Formation and Bladon member mudstone and limestone in the central eastern part of the Site (www.bgs.ac.uk). There are no superficial deposits recorded.
- 2.6 The land within the Site is largely flat (c.115m above Ordnance Datum (aOD)), although it gently slopes downwards towards the east, to a height of c.110m aOD along the eastern boundary road.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.7 An Archaeological and Heritage desk-based assessment (DBA) was undertaken to inform the Outline planning application (EDP, updated January 2024). This document, as well as the fieldwork reports noted below were submitted with the planning application.
- 2.8 The DBA established that the Site lay in an area of potential for archaeological remains of the later prehistoric and Roman Periods. A key observation made in the DBA was that the Site contains cropmarks that were recorded from aerial photographs, and which could relate to buried archaeological remains.
- 2.9 A programme of archaeological geophysical survey was carried out in two phases across the Site, the first in 2015 and the second in 2021, both by ASWYAS. These surveys identified various anomalies that were thought to be potential archaeological features. A broad overview of the anomalies is presented on **Plan EDP 1**.

- 2.10 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out between August and November 2022 by Cotswold Archaeology (2023). The evaluation targeted geophysical anomalies and provided coverage over other parts of the Site. A total of 168 trenches were dug providing a 4% sample of the land at the Site, although six of the originally planned trenches were not excavated in **F3**, to the north-east of the Site, due to upstanding agricultural crop. This omission was agreed at the time with the Council's advisor.
- 2.11 Archaeological remains were recorded by the trial trenching, predominantly focused to the east and south of the Site. Those features are described below, with the trenches and features identified on **Plan EDP 1**.
- 2.12 The earliest remains recorded within the Site were settlement and funerary remains dated to the Middle to Late Iron Age, with indication that activity continued into the 1st century AD, suggesting a 'transitional period' into the Roman period.
- 2.13 This phase was most prevalent in the east of the Site (**F5** in the geophysical survey). Four burials were identified along with several ditches and a ring gully, which is indicative of an Iron Age round house, each containing pottery sherds dating to the 1st century AD. Occasional further, more dispersed, evidence of Iron Age activity was recorded elsewhere within the Site including a pit/ditch in the southern parcel of the Site (**F1**), a gully terminus at the western edge of the Site (**F2**), and several discrete posthole features at the north-east of the Site (**F4**).
- 2.14 The second phase, to which majority of features recorded during the evaluation were dated, dates to the Roman period. This phase was again focused to the east and south of the Site. To the east (**F5** and **F6**), a series of stone walls and ditches were found that were dated from pottery to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD, with many ditches showing evidence of re-cutting and reuse of an earlier ditch system. These features corresponded to an area of aerial photograph cropmarks and geophysics anomalies (ASWYAS, 2021) and have been interpreted by Cotswold Archaeology as the remains of a "*villa rustica*" along with associated agricultural land management.
- 2.15 To the south (**F1**), a pair of double ditches were recorded forming a projected north/south trackway route. This trackway which was previously identified by the geophysical survey (ASWYAS, 2021) and was tentatively dated by Cotswold Archaeology to the Romano-British period from pottery found in a single ditch section.
- 2.16 The third phase relates to early medieval activity and is focused on the south of the Site (**F1**). This comprised two sunken feature buildings (SFB), which correspond to features identified by the earlier geophysical survey (ASWYAS, 2021). Saxon pottery and several loom weights were recovered from the fills of the SFBs, and the finds indicate that they can be broadly dated between the 7th and 8th century AD. Two additional potential SFBs were recorded in plan but were not excavated; these features are thought likely to also date to the early medieval period.
- 2.17 Occasional undated features were also recorded, (**F2**), this included several ditches and gullies focused on the western edge of the Site, from which no finds were recovered.

- 2.18 These known archaeological features form the target for the scope of further mitigation works outlined in the WSI. For reference in the discussion at **Section 3**, they are numbered on **Plan EDP 1** and within **Table EDP 2.1** below, setting out what each area of interest relates to.
- 2.19 Elsewhere within the Site, features related to 1) medieval to post-medieval practices, comprising ridge and furrow cultivation features in **F6** and **F7**, and former field boundaries across the Site, and 2) post-medieval quarrying practices, comprising quarry pits in the south (**F1** and **F7**) and west (**F2**) of the Site, as well as two to the east (**F5**). Whilst these quarry pits were not dated by artefactual finds, field name evidence from 19th century mapping indicates the known use of the Site for quarrying in the post-medieval period, before becoming enclosed in the 18th century. As such, the latest form of these quarry pits, as reflected in the archaeological remains, is most likely post-medieval in date.
- 2.20 Consultation with OCAS has confirmed the position in the DBA (EDP, 2024) that these features are of no greater than minor or negligible archaeological interest and do not warrant further archaeological mitigation. They are thus not considered further within the remit of this WSI.

Table EDP 2.1: Areas of Archaeological Interest

Area of Interest	Description (Based on Evaluation and DBA)	Field/Trench Numbers
1	Area of Iron Age and Roman archaeology, comprising features related to Mid iron Age – 1 st century AD funerary, land management and possible settlement, as well as a 2 nd to 4 th century Roman settlement and associated land management features.	F5 – Trenches 108 - 110, 113 – 128. F6 - Trenches 131 - 134, 138.
2	Area of early medieval (Anglo-Saxon) archaeology comprising a number of sunken featured buildings, as well as part of a trackway of unclear date, potentially Roman.	F1 – Trenches 160, 161, 162.
3	Undated ditches and gullies.	F2 – Trenches 24 and 34.

Section 3

Fieldwork Investigations: Aims, Scope and Programme

AIMS

- 3.1 The primary aim of this WSI is to define the archaeological work to be completed prior to the commencement of development, in order to ensure that any archaeological remains are treated in accordance with the requirements of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF).
- 3.2 With regard to the evaluative aspect, the first phase of investigation and recording, the principal aim of the trial trench evaluation will be to gather data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits. Specifically, the aim of the evaluation will be to establish the presence, location, extent and condition of any archaeological features within the Site.
- 3.3 The primary objective of the mitigation works will be the collection of high-quality data on archaeological deposits within the Site ahead of their loss. Accordingly, its aim will be to provide a permanent record of the archaeological resource within the Site prior to its destruction, through on-site investigation and post-excavation analysis, as well as the dissemination of the results to a wider audience, as appropriate, and the deposition of a well-ordered archive in a suitable repository following completion.
- 3.4 Where mitigation fieldwork is required, the Client will also be required to fund the completion of a process of post-excavation assessment, analysis and publication. The level of detail for this will be dependent on the outcome of the mitigation and will be agreed in advance through consultation with OCAS.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 3.5 All archaeological investigation will be managed by a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).
- 3.6 The following relevant guidelines and standards for archaeological fieldwork, where appropriate, will be adhered to during the execution of the investigation:
 - CIfA - *Code of Conduct* (2022);
 - CIfA - *Standard and Guidance Documents for Archaeological Excavation* (2023a), *Evaluation* (2023b) and the *Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (2020); and
 - Historic England volume entitled *The Management of Research Projects for the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (2015).

Scope

- 3.7 The archaeological investigations will comprise a series of works prior to the commencement of works to redevelop the Site. The archaeological investigation will comprise:
1. Eight trial trenches of 50m x 1.8m in order to evaluate part of the Site (**F3**) that was not previously evaluated due to access issues;
 2. Open area excavation (**F5/6**) of 7.7ha, in order to record the area of interest (1) by way of mitigation;
 3. Open area excavation (**F1**) of 1.03ha, in order to record the area of interest (2) by way of mitigation;
 4. Open area excavation (**F2**) of 0.47ha, in order to record the area of interest (3) by way of mitigation; and
 5. Any further mitigation works, should remains of archaeological interest be recorded by the eight evaluation trenches.
- 3.8 The locations of the defined areas are shown on the plans at **Plan EDP 1**.
- 3.9 As per (5) above, once the trial trenching (1) has been completed, further mitigation work may be required. The precise scope of any such mitigation work (if necessary) will be agreed between EDP and OCAS.

Programme

- 3.10 It is expected that the trial trench evaluation will be undertaken ahead of any grant of planning permission.
- 3.11 In accordance with Paragraphs 210 and 211 of the NPPF, the archaeological mitigation works would be undertaken after the grant of planning permission in accordance with a planning condition that would be anticipated to request delivery in line with this WSI.
- 3.12 As agreed during consultation with OCAS, and as detailed in the Design Brief at **Appendix EDP 3**, there is flexibility for the archaeological mitigation to be undertaken in several phases.
- 3.13 A possible scenario might result of the delivery of the northern part of the Site (north of the B1400) in phases. This scenario may result in Excavation Area 1 being split by the development boundary.
- 3.14 In this scenario (which is shown on **Plan EDP 3**), the mitigation works would be delivered as three phases as follows:
- a. A phase comprising the northern half of Excavation Area 1, hereafter referred to as 1(a), and the entirety of Excavation Area 3;

- b. A phase comprising the southern half of Excavation Area 1, hereafter referred to as 1(b); and
- c. A phase comprising the entirety of Excavation Area 2.

3.15 The precise extent of Excavation Areas 1(a) and 1(b) would be defined by the order in which they are delivered. The first phase to come forward would include an access road, as shown on **Plan EDP 3** and so the extent of each Area would depend on which part would include the road. The areas for these two scenarios (**Plan EDP 3**) would be as follows:

Northern Phase Excavation First

- Area 1(a) = 3.4ha; and
- Area 1(b) = 4.3ha.

Southern Phase Excavation First

- Area 1(a) = 2.5ha; and
- Area 1(b) = 5.2ha.

3.16 If this phased approach is employed, and Excavation Area 1 is divided into 1(a) and 1(b), the following requirements have been stipulated by OCAS, as detailed in the Design Brief (**Appendix EDP 3**).

Buffer Zones

- 3.17 Buffer zones between the two phases will be utilised to ensure as many 'whole' features are included in single phases as possible, to minimise the number of features which may be split by the phasing methodology.
- 3.18 It is anticipated that these buffer zones will comprise a c.10m area between Area 1(a) and 1(b), in order to fully excavate any features that extend across the boundary. The size and extent of these buffer zones will be agreed with OCAS during initial topsoil stripping operations for the excavation area in question.

Fencing

- 3.19 Permanent Heras fencing will be installed to clearly demarcate the excavation areas and ensure that the area of the second phase is not impacted on during any activity related to the first phase of construction.
- 3.20 The fencing will have signage clearly stating that it is protecting an archaeological area with no access.
- 3.21 These fences will be maintained and inspected during the period between the first and second phase of construction by EDP.

Continuity

3.22 In order to ensure that the archaeological excavation across the two potential phases will be consistent, the same archaeological contractor will be utilised for Excavation Areas 1(a)

and 1(b), in order to keep a continuous methodology and recording standards and to prevent records becoming distorted.

- 3.23 In order to ensure this is practicable, the excavation of Areas 1(a) and 1(b) will be carried out within a timescale of no more than two years.

Section 4 Methodology

- 4.1 Methodologies specific to the archaeological evaluation works and archaeological excavation works are set out in the sections below.
- 4.2 The archaeological investigations will be carried out by a specialist archaeological contractor, preferably a Registered Organisation with ClfA.
- 4.3 In accordance with Paragraph 2.2.5 of the Design Brief produced by OCAS (**Appendix EDP 3**), a Method Statement, detailing specific information concerned with project team, programming and health and safety, will be produced by the archaeological contractor and submitted to OCAS for approval, prior to the commencement of each phase of archaeological works.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

- 4.4 Archaeological trial trench evaluation represents a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area of a site on land and inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present, field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their significance in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.
- 4.5 The evaluation will be carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* issued by ClfA, (2023b). The given standard is:
- “An archaeological field evaluation will determine and report on, as far as is reasonably possible, the nature of the archaeological resource within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims on the project, and comply with the Code of conduct and other relevant regulations of ClfA.”*
- 4.6 The below summarises the *Standards and Guidance* issued by the ClfA, (2023b).
- 4.7 The field evaluation will comprise the excavation of trenches across the parts of the Site which require additional information regarding the archaeological resource. The aims of the evaluation trenching will be to:
- Determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
 - Identify their location, nature, date and state of preservation;
 - Assess their significance; and
 - Assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

- 4.8 The trenches will be excavated by a mechanical excavator fitted with a flat-bladed, toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision, removing spits of no more than 0.2m at a time and placing the spoil at a safe distance (i.e. at least a metre) from the trench edge. Topsoil and subsoil will be stored separately.
- 4.9 Provision will be made for archaeological stratigraphy in excess of c.1m deep, which may need to be examined and sampled although such deposits are not anticipated. This will depend on the ground conditions, but it is noted that the trenches may require battering back or shoring to facilitate investigation of deeply buried deposits.
- 4.10 Machining will cease when the first significant archaeological horizon is reached, from which point hand excavation and recording will commence, employing the method which is contained within the *ClfA Standards and Guidance (2023b)*.
- 4.11 Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits identified must be excavated by hand through a sampling procedure specified or agreed with OCAS to enable their date, nature, extent and condition to be described.
- 4.12 The pre-construction trench evaluation will:
- Record the nature of the main stratigraphic units encountered in terms of their physical composition (stone, sand, gravel, organic materials, etc.) and their archaeological formation (primary deposits, secondary deposits, etc.);
 - Assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of artefactual evidence (including pottery, brick, tile, stone, glass, metal, bone, small finds, industrial residues etc.), its condition, given the nature of the deposits encountered;
 - Assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of ecofactual and environmental evidence (including animal bone, human bone, plant remains, pollen, charcoal, molluscs, soils, etc.), its condition and potential, given the nature of the deposits encountered;
 - Establish the depth of significant archaeological remains below the existing ground level, as well as confirming their aOD heights; and
 - Make the results available for the wider archaeological community.
- 4.13 Once opened, OCAS will be invited to inspect the trenches to confirm that sufficient evidence has been gathered to characterise the archaeological sequence. At this stage, a preliminary discussion regarding the requirement for, and scope of, any further mitigation will be undertaken. Further mitigation is likely to comprise excavation carried out within a defined part of the Site.
- 4.14 The trenches will not be backfilled until inspected and signed off by OCAS.
- 4.15 It is expected that the trenches will be backfilled with the excavated material on completion of the fieldwork, but not resurfaced.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

- 4.16 Archaeological excavation is a programme of controlled, intrusive fieldwork with defined research objectives, which examines, records and interprets archaeological deposits, features and structures and, as appropriate, retrieves artefacts, ecofacts and other remains within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. The records made and objects gathered during fieldwork are studied, and the results of that study published in detail appropriate to the project design.
- 4.17 Any excavation will be carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* issued by ClfA (2023a). The given standard is:
- “An archaeological excavation will examine and record the archaeological resource within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims of the project, and comply with the Code of conduct and other relevant regulations of ClfA. It will result in one or more published accounts and an ordered, accessible archive.”*
- 4.18 The below summarises the *Standards and Guidance* issued by ClfA, (2023a).
- 4.19 The primary aim of the proposed mitigation is to ensure that any archaeological remains are treated in accordance with planning policy set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF, 2023), in the context of which buried archaeological remains within the Site, represent a non-designated heritage asset of archaeological interest. Specifically, regard is given to Paragraph 211 which requests that local planning authorities should:
- “...require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.”*
- 4.20 In general, the excavation will aim to:
- Establish the location, extent, nature and heritage significance of any archaeological deposits or materials within the area(s) proposed for excavation;
 - Make an appropriate record of such deposits and material prior to their destruction;
 - Disseminate the results of the archaeological works, proportionate to the findings of the fieldwork; and
 - Deposit a well-ordered archive in an appropriate repository following completion.
- 4.21 If significant archaeological remains are identified during excavation, the completion of a process of post-excavation assessment will be required to feed into dissemination and/or publication of the results. The need for (and extent of) this will be agreed through consultation with OCAS.
- 4.22 In fulfilling these aims and objectives, the proposed archaeological works will comprise appropriate and satisfactory mitigation of the expected effects of the scheme.

- 4.23 All excavation areas will be opened by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The excavation areas will be excavated by machine under direct archaeological supervision and will be excavated in controlled spits. Machine excavation will terminate at the top of the natural geology or the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever is encountered first.
- 4.24 Care will be taken to ensure plant and machines do not damage underlying remains, particularly in soft conditions or track across stripped areas.
- 4.25 The machine used will be powerful enough for a clean job of work and all spoil will need to be stored at a safe distance from the excavation edges. All spoil will be observed, and metal detected for any archaeological finds.

Sampling Strategy

- 4.26 A specific sampling strategy will be agreed on-site between OCAS, the archaeological contractor and EDP. Deposits will be excavated by hand, using appropriate tools. All archaeological features will be subject to appropriate levels of excavation. However, the below provides an indicative sampling strategy as detailed in the Design Brief (**Appendix EDP 3**). Any changes to this strategy will need to be agreed with OCAS:
- All structural features or those relating to a specialised activity will be subject to a 100% sample;
 - All post and stake holes that relate to specialised activities will be subject to a 100% sample. Others will be subject to a 50% sample;
 - All pits will be half sectioned. In some instances, 100% excavation may be requested depending on the nature of the feature/deposit;
 - A minimum of 20% or 10 metres, whichever is greater, of all linear features will be sampled;
 - If burials and or cremations are revealed Ministry of Justice licence under Section 25 of the *Burial Act 1857* will be obtained. All exhumation and post excavation treatment will be carried out in accordance with published guidelines. OCAS will need to be informed of any human remains encountered;
 - All kilns and hearths etc. will be sampled and fully excavated;
 - Occupation deposits/stratified layers – needs to identify hand excavation of any stratified layers in 2.5m or 1m systematic and gridded squares to be agreed on the basis of the complexity/extent of such layers with OCAS. This should include for provision for on-site sieving of occupation levels and/or building fills for small artefacts/ecofacts;
 - No archaeological deposits or features should be investigated by machine without the agreement of OCAS;

- All intersections of features are to be examined in order to fully understand date and phasing;
- Features of possible geological origin should also be sampled until confidence can be established as to their non-archaeological origin; and
- Following excavation sampling, archaeological features that have not been sampled should be subject to metal detecting and any finds identified recovered.

Treasure

- 4.27 If, during the course of excavation, items are found that may be potentially defined as 'Treasure' under the Code of Practice for the *Treasure Act 1996*, the archaeological contractor will be responsible for ensuring that the County Coroner is informed. OCAS and the Finds Liaison Officer will also need to be informed of any possible treasure finds.

Data Collection

- 4.28 As defined by the Brief provided by OCAS, "*the data collection strategy should be part of a structured academic research agenda based on local and national research priorities*".
- 4.29 A Selection Strategy and Data Management Plan will be set out in the archaeological contractor's Method Statement. This will include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds and advise, or report on, other aspects of the investigation including environmental sampling and analysis.

Reporting

- 4.30 It is expected that a Site meeting or interim report will be sufficient to determine the need (or lack thereof) for further mitigation work following evaluation trenching.
- 4.31 Otherwise, a report (in .pdf form) will be produced by the appointed contractor, no later than 12 months after the excavation fieldwork has been completed. The report will set out the background to the investigation, the aims and methods employed, and a summary of the key features and deposits recorded in each trench, as well as evidence for dates where possible, and a quantification of the recovered artefactual material.
- 4.32 More particularly, the report will review the methodology used and consider the confidence rating of the results. In light of this, it will assess the nature, extent, date, condition and significance of the archaeological findings, with specialist opinions within the context of the wider area.
- 4.33 This will be done with specific regard to research aims in line with the Solent-Thames Research Framework (Hey and Hind, 2014), discussed fully below, with the aim to investigate and inform our understanding of the wider historical landscape.
- 4.34 Digital copies of the report will be supplied to OCAS for their review and approval, subsequent to which, copies will be made available to the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

- 4.35 GIS (shape) files of the final phases of the excavated Site plan should also be provided to OCAS.
- 4.36 A summary of the results of archaeological works will also be submitted for inclusion in OASIS by the appointed contractor and the OASIS reference will appear in the report.
- 4.37 As per Paragraph 4.4 of the Design Brief (**Appendix EDP 3**), if a phased approach is employed, summary reports of each phase will be submitted to OCAS in .pdf format within 12 months of the completion of fieldwork within each phase of extraction. These summary reports will also be submitted to the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Records (HER) in digital form.
- 4.38 Should further mitigation (i.e. targeted excavation) be required, a timescale to produce the report will be confirmed to the Council's advisor by the appointed contractor prior to commencement. However, it is anticipated the second phase report will be produced within no more than 12 months following completion of the fieldwork. Timescales, layout and content will be agreed with the Council's advisor prior to production.

Research Objectives

- 4.39 The excavation will contribute to the agendas for further archaeological research detailed in the Archaeology of the Solent Thames Research Framework (Hey and Hind, 2014).
- 4.40 The Site's known archaeological remains, which are the focus of the excavation, date from the Late Iron Age/Roman periods and early medieval periods. As such, the work has potential to contribute to the research agendas set out in Chapters 10, 12 and 14 of the Research Framework.
- 4.41 Specifically, the project has potential to contribute to the dating of Iron Age finds and contexts through increasingly scientific methods of dating such as accelerator mass-spectrometry radiocarbon dating of secure, sampled contexts, Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL), dendrochronology and residue analysis, as per 10.3 Chronology of the Research Framework. With regard to artefacts, the Research Framework also notes that these can further contribute to an understanding of Material Culture (10.8), in particular with regard to pottery where *"detailed study of assemblages from large numbers of excavated sites would allow exploration of the distributions of pottery fabrics, changing fashions in fabrics, forms and decoration, the definition of sub-regional styles of pottery and their links to social groups"*.
- 4.42 The work also has potential to contribute to a better understanding of settlement and agricultural land use in the Iron Age, as per 10.5 Settlement, Landscapes and 10.6 Social Organisation, Landscape and Land Use; particularly with regard to the division of land for familial farmsteads and how this land division was managed (10.4.5-10.4.8/10.6.1/10.6.5).
- 4.43 There is also potential for a better understanding of regionality in the Late Iron Age/Roman period and for the process of change (as per 12.2 Inheritance of the Research Framework), especially given that the Site has produced evidence for archaeological remains from two distinct periods and thus a question can be asked as to whether and how the two phases

might interrelate and how to define the change between two periods which currently have such an undefined boundary.

- 4.44 The known Roman period remains previously identified relate to structural remains of a “*villa rustica*” and associated land management features, as such these can help to convey information on the nature of Roman rural settlement in this area and the use of material culture as well as to potentially understand the nature and date of any associated field system and farming practices.
- 4.45 Environmental evidence could be used to improve an understanding of how field systems operated and developed (12.3.1), as well as changes in farming regimes and methods (12.3.2-12.3.3).
- 4.46 The structural remains and associated evidence could provide further detail on Social Organisation (12.5), as well as the Characterisation of Settlement (12.6.1) and its subsequent decline and abandonment (12.6.4-12.6.5).
- 4.47 Similarly, to the above, the Site holds potential to improve an understanding of the transition between the Roman period and the early medieval or Saxon period, as per 14.2 Inheritance of the Research Framework. This includes considering the way in which farming practices, settlements and material culture either continued to function, or fell into disuse.
- 4.48 The known early medieval period remains previously identified relate to structural remains, and thus can contribute to an Understanding of Settlement (14.5) and Social Organisation, Economy and Subsistence (14.6), with evidence from environmental and artefactual remains supporting this.
- 4.49 It is not anticipated that the results of the archaeological works will be able to contribute to all of the agenda topics that are outlined above. However, these research aims will influence the analysis presented within the report and inform the sampling strategy and subsequent post-excavation methodology adopted, such as the application of radio-carbon dating.

Archiving

- 4.50 As per Paragraph 8.1 of the Design Brief (**Appendix EDP 3**), “*the contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that the full integrated site archive including all finds shall be deposited after completion of post-excavation work with the County Museums Service (Oxfordshire Museums) unless another repository is indicated*”.
- 4.51 The specialist contractor will also be responsible for ensuring that all digital data generated by the excavation is archived with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) and an OASIS record created.
- 4.52 Full details on the specialist contractor’s archiving strategy will be included within the Method Statements produced ahead of each phase of works.
- 4.53 In the event of the legal owner(s) resolving to retain all or part of the Site archive, they shall be responsible for the future preservation and maintenance of any material element of that archive. That part of the Site archive in question, shall be transferred to the legal owner only after; all necessary processing, research, analysis and investigative/stabilising

conservation and correct packing necessary, to prepare the archive for preservation and in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication, has been completed.

- 4.54 The owner shall ensure that all necessary provision is made for the long-term preservation of the archive in a satisfactory environment, and that it is accessible for future research. The archaeological contractor will ensure that a proper record of material is kept by the landowner shall be included in the written archive and public record. The explicit (written) permission of the owner shall be obtained for the latter in order that the *Data Protection Act 1984* is not contravened.

Contingency Works

- 4.55 Should the nature/extent and significance of the archaeological remains warrant it, an appropriate contingency is included to facilitate the expansion of the archaeological excavation areas. The extent of any such contingency will be agreed through consultation between EDP and OCAS ahead of any implementation.
- 4.56 The agreed excavation areas are based on the results of archaeological evaluation consisting of geophysical survey and trial trenching. These works did locate concentrations of archaeological remains, but this does not preclude that some significant remains could extend outside the mitigation areas proposed.
- 4.57 In the event that significant archaeological resources are revealed at the edge of the excavation areas, that are only partially within the excavation, or if there is evidence that significant archaeological remains probably extend outside of an excavation area, the initial area will be extended (stripped of soils) to an extent agreed between EDP and OCAS. Any extension will be only within the Site and subject to restrictions such as exclusion from areas known to contain services and the root protection zones of trees and hedgerows, provided that these are to stay intact following development.
- 4.58 The decision to proceed with an additional strip, extending the extent of any excavation area, will only be made following a review by EDP and OCAS on the basis that significant archaeological remains would otherwise be destroyed without record were the contingency not to be implemented. The extent of the strip will be kept under regular review by EDP and OCAS, and the decision that the extension is sufficient will be made only through consultation between EDP and OCAS.

Public Engagement

- 4.59 Paragraph 3.4 of the Design Brief produced by OCAS stipulates that “*a programme of public engagement will be required, and the mitigation will need to consider a wide range of outreach activities appropriate to the scale of the project. Consideration should be given to site visits from the community and schools as well as public talks and exhibitions*”.
- 4.60 The need for such outreach, and an appropriate and proportionate response, will be agreed with OCAS based upon 1) the results of the fieldwork, and 2) the accessibility of the Site.

Section 5

Project Management, Resourcing and Timetable

- 5.1 All archaeological fieldwork, post-excavation, reporting and archiving for the project will be managed by EDP on behalf of Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd.
- 5.2 EDP is a Registered Organisation (RO) with ClfA.
- 5.3 EDP will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the WSI, in addition to the ClfA *Code of Conduct* and relevant *Standard and Guidance* documents (ClfA 2022, 2023a, 2023b).
- 5.4 In doing so, and managing the archaeological contractor to complete the project, it will satisfy the requirements of ClfA (2020) *Standard and Guidance for Commissioning Work on, or Providing Consultancy Advice on, Archaeology and the Historic Environment*.
- 5.5 All archaeological fieldwork, post-excavation, reporting and archiving will be completed by the archaeological contractor. Detail of the management and resourcing of the archaeological contractor's team will be set out in their Method Statement to be agreed with OCAS ahead of each phase of works.

TIMETABLE

- 5.6 Subject to agreement of the scope of works, it is anticipated that the archaeological trial trenching will be undertaken in Spring 2024, ahead of determination of the planning application.
- 5.7 The excavation works will be undertaken in accordance with the programme of pre-commencement enabling works, following any planning permission granted for the application. The phasing and timetabling of these works will be determined following the grant of planning permission and this will be communicated at that time to OCAS.
- 5.8 Oxfordshire Museums Service will also be notified of the fieldwork so an accession number can be issued, and included in the report.

Section 6 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 All archaeological investigation and recording at the Site will be subject to the WSI and the supplementary Method Statements provided by the archaeological contractor, which will be submitted to and approved by OCAS in advance of works proceeding.
- 6.2 OCAS shall be notified of the official start date of any phase at least two weeks prior to the commencement of work, following the agreement of the Method Statements, in order to arrange a date for monitoring visits.
- 6.3 OCAS will be afforded access to visit the Site, as required, to inspect the archaeological works and ensure that they are being conducted both to the proper professional standards and in accordance with the WSI and Method Statement(s).
- 6.4 In that regard, the purpose of the on-site monitoring/review meetings will be to establish that the approved WSI is being properly implemented and the ClfA *Code of Conduct* and relevant ClfA *Standard and Guidance* documents complied with.
- 6.5 No parts of the excavation areas will be handed back to the developer until written confirmation that they have been signed off is obtained from OCAS. A post excavation plan showing the features and interventions along with grid references will need to be provided for any sign off areas in advance of this written confirmation.
- 6.6 An up-to-date Site plan will need to be provided to OCAS prior to any Site monitoring meeting.
- 6.7 To facilitate the smooth running of this process, a projected timetable for the Site meetings will be agreed in advance between EDP, the Client and OCAS. This is expected to include meetings at the following key stages of the project:
1. Following the completion of the evaluation trial trenches, in order to agree an appropriate strategy for mitigation (if required);
 2. Following the completion of stripping operations for any phase of excavation, in order to agree the finalised approach to sampling of those features and deposits exposed in this method;
 3. Following the completion of any phase of excavation and to facilitate the backfill of the excavation areas, or otherwise to hand it to the developer/contractor; and
 4. Following the preparation of the 'post-excavation assessment report' (if required) and in order to define and agree the parameters and timetable for completion of the subsequent phases covering analysis, publication and archiving.
- 6.8 The precise programme will depend on the timings and nature of the results in each phase of work and so it may therefore be possible to reduce the number of review meetings; although likewise, if complicated and/or extensive archaeological remains are identified at

the Site, it may be desirable to increase the frequency of the review meetings outlined above to ensure the smooth running of the project.

Section 7

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Appendix EDP 1
Illustrative Masterplan
(SGP Architects and Masterplanners)



Rev	Date	By	Description
P08	18/03/24	KM	Access Updated

- Key:
- ⋯ Indicative Park Trail
 - ✱ Indicative Activity Hub



SGP

Architects + Masterplanners

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2a Smith Way
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Symmetry Park,
Ardley
M40 Junction 10

Drawing Name:
Illustrative Masterplan - Option 3 - NSA

Drawing Stage: PRELIMINARY
Suitability: S0 - Work In Progress

SGP File Ref: 14-019-SGP-XX-XX-DR-A-001010-P8 Planning Issue.dwg

14-019 01/2023 KM MMS 1:2000 @ A1 P8
SGP Project No: Date: Drawn: Team: Scale: Rev:

Drawing Number:
14-019 -SGP-XX-XX-DR-A-001010

Project Code Originator Volume Level Type Role Number



Appendix EDP 2
Consultation Response from Victoria Green, the Council's Advisor
(September-December 2023)

From: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 31 October 2023 09:44
To: Rob Skinner
Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

Dear Rob,

Thank you, these proposed areas are acceptable.

Kind regards,

Victoria

From: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>
Sent: Monday, October 30, 2023 3:44 PM
To: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Victoria,

Thank you for your agreement regarding the quarry pits. Noted re: the undated gullies/ditches in Field 2. On that basis would you support the attached proposal which shows three mitigation excavation areas? I have tweaked the one in Field 1 to suit our discussion below whereby it now takes in the full extent of the 'corner' of the trackway so as we can fully investigate it. As usual this work would be supported by a contingency for extension should significant remains occur beyond the boundaries that would include further stripping of the trackway, if this is deemed fruitful after the excavation of the field 1 area.

The proposal would also include the 8 trial trenches which are not shown on this plan.

If you agree to this, I can then discuss this with my client as a suitable basis for a mitigation strategy document/WSI.

Many thanks,

Rob

Rob Skinner *(he/him) BA (Hons), MA, ACIFA*
Associate

m 07557 021709
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From: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, October 27, 2023 8:09 AM
To: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>
Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

Dear Rob,

Thank you for this further information regarding the quarry pits at Ardley Symmetry Park. It is likely that the large area of quarrying is post-Medieval and will not need further archaeological mitigation. My previously suggested area of SMS covered the ditches and gullies recorded in Trenches 24 and 34, and so, could a much smaller area of SMS be carried out to investigate these features.

Kind regards,

Victoria

From: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>
Sent: Monday, October 23, 2023 11:14 AM
To: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

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Hi Victoria,

Since your email below it occurred to me to revisit the desk-based assessment, as there is reference to 19th stone quarrying in the site from the estate map of 1860, which is referenced at 4.182 in the report – ‘...an estate map of 1860, which records a field name within the Site as ‘stone pit ground’’. In looking into this reference, we have carried out a little more research and acquired a copy of the schedule that accompanied this map (both map and relevant part of the schedule are attached).

It is noteworthy that the map records a stone pit in the site and several nearby (albeit not in the location of our pits in Field 2 of the evaluation) and, that Field no. 15 (in the Schedule) is named as Stone Pit Ground. This field equates to our Field 7 and we found quarry pits in that field in TRs 50 and 59. Whilst this evidence does not identify the large quarry pits in Field 2, it does demonstrate that the land at the site was being used for stone extraction at this time. It was clearly recognised as a source of limestone and quarrying was taking place which could easily have been occurring in various areas (other than those specifically identified on the map in 1860) where the stone is present, during the 19th century and before.

The field in which the larger pits were found is named in the Schedule (Field 13) as ‘Lime Kiln Ground’. There are evidently no above ground remains of a lime kiln and no buried remains were found in the evaluation that would have identified a kiln’s location, however, as noted by Historic England in their *Introduction to Heritage Assets – Pre-industrial limekilns* document, ‘The stone for burning was usually extracted from sources close to the kilns themselves, so extraction pits may sometimes lie nearby’. On this basis I would suggest that the limestone quarrying in that area probably relates to 19th century lime making, and thus the pits are most likely of 19th century date. Certainly, I refer to my argument in my email below that, in an area that evidently provides a source of stone, early quarry pits would almost certainly have been over-dug and expanded by later efforts at extraction (which appears to have definitely occurred) and so what we are now seeing are backfilled pits related to 19th century (or thereabouts) extraction of limestone.

Furthermore, I queried the provenance of the pits with Richard Greatorex at Cotswold, and he said the following, (noting that Richard wasn't aware of the recorded lime making history when he wrote this):

'if they were undisturbed Roman quarries we would have had more evidence from them – at least some basic food utensils – even if they were using slaves. They are not even that extensive and the quality of stone is poor/fragile – Tritax and Albion Land only use that stuff for their piling mats or to raise ground levels if building on the flood plain – historically probably just used as infill for walls or 'hard' core for track ways – not much use for anything else – if it was being more widely used the quarries would have been much larger – this looks like post-med farmers just grabbing the best outcrops for their farm tracks.'

With the additional map evidence and Richards comments I would again refer to my argument below that the greatest likelihood is that the pits are of a relatively recent date and are of limited archaeological interest and thus do not warrant a level of controlled archaeological investigation especially considering the amount of work that would be required to properly section and sample one of them, let alone all of them. We already know the basics, that quarrying has occurred historically in the local area, right up until at least the 19th century, and that therefore there may have been a local source of stone for the Roman buildings. This information does feed into the interpretation of the site, but I have serious doubts as to whether we can achieve much more than that. I mean, what's to say that a slightly better quality of stone was available just beyond our site boundary? Being restricted by our site area, we don't have information on all of the surrounding land so we can never really know where the building stone actually came from, to assume it came from our site from an area of known later limestone extraction is ignoring the nature of the Roman landscape and the extent of the building resources that would have been available to them.

I hope that with this additional information you might reconsider your position but I'm happy to discuss this issue further.

Kind regards,

Rob

Rob Skinner (he/him) BA (Hons), MA, ACIfA
Associate

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From: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2023 8:52 AM

To: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>

Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

Dear Rob,

I would still like there to be a level of archaeological monitoring in the area of the quarry pits; though there was no definitive evidence of them being Roman, the evaluation also did not prove that they are post-Medieval. Would it be more practicable to carry out a watching brief on the area when the area and level of reduction has been finalised, and then a level of sampling can be agreed.

Kind regards,

Victoria

From: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2023 10:24 AM
To: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

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Hi Victoria,

I've just been speaking to the planners on this. The cut and fill proposals are not yet fully finalised and so cannot be released at this point. He did say that in general, the plan would be to reduce levels in the western part of the site and build up in the east, which will include a bund. As such, I would presume that levels would be reduced in the area where we recorded the quarries.

If you can now get back to me regarding the quarry area and my comments in the email below that would be much appreciated.

Kind regards,

Rob

Rob Skinner *(he/him) BA (Hons), MA, ACIFA*
Associate

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From: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2023 9:38 AM
To: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>
Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

Hi Rob,

Yes please, I would like to better understand the groundworks in this area.

Kind regards,

Victoria

From: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 2:05 PM
To: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

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Hi Victoria,

Thank you for getting back to me. The approach for field 1 seems sensible and I will broach this as a way forward with the client.

Can I just gauge your thoughts regarding your request for cut and fill info specifically for the quarry areas, are you just looking to better understand the site's proposed groundworks?

Many thanks,

Rob

Rob Skinner *(he/him) BA (Hons), MA, ACIFA*
Associate

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w www.edp-uk.co.uk

From: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 11:47 AM

To: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>

Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

Hi Rob,

Thank you for your comments; I would be happy for the Field 1 excavation area to be extended as you have proposed, and then we can assess if further work is warranted on the trackway. The WSI could include a clause with a contingency for extending the excavation area if there are features continuing out of which require further excavation/recording.

Would the client be able to provide any information on the proposed cut/fill in the northern quarry area?

Kind regards,

Victoria

From: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, October 4, 2023 12:13 PM

To: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Victoria,

Thanks for getting back to me.

Regarding the strip, map and sample area suggestion I have a few comments which are below. Its also worth pointing out that there will be some cut and fill proposed across the site so there probably won't be an even topsoil strip in all areas, I can find out more about this.

Trackway

In order to provide useful context to the Anglo-Saxon buildings, it would need to be demonstrated that the trackway is in fact broadly contemporary. Based on the eval results, for the ditches that seemed to definitely define the track we have had no dating evidence. In that respect the track could be a product of any period including much later periods whereby it would be of limited archaeological interest and the expense associated with flat blade stripping it under archaeological supervision would be disproportionate to its significance.

A piece of IA pottery came out of the ditch at 16207, but it's not clear whether that E-W ditch is in fact related to the track which is only properly defined as such in the geophysics further north. It could be an unrelated and fairly run of the mill IA ditch crossing that field. As such again, on the basis of the data that we have, id query the need for the eastern of the two SMS areas in field 1, as we don't know if there is a track in this location.

However, I appreciate that if the track is contemporary with the settlement remains then it would provide an interesting context to them and thus be of elevated significance so as to warrant the extra work in plotting its course and digging further sections.

What I suggest follows (although id have to run all of this by my client). In the programme the excavation area would come first, as the aim would be to complete these areas before any other site groundwork (in the areas in question). If we tweaked the excavation plan a bit, we could include the corner bit of the track (see attached plan). That work should be able to define whether the track actually corners and runs east, whether there is a relationship with the A-S settlement and hopefully get some dating evidence for the track and any other ditches in the area. Once this work is complete, we could then make a decision on the significance of these features and thus the reasonableness of further SMS. Does that sound like a plan that you'd support?

Quarry area

With the quarry pits, again there is no unequivocal evidence that they were Roman and thus possibly related to the settlement. The rocky area in which they are situated evidently provided a source of good stone and it is likely that it was queried in successive phases probably over a long history. What we have now is going to be the most recent phase whereby any Roman prospection may have been totally expanded and over dug. For example, if Romans dug a quarry pit and left a hole what's stopping people a few hundred years later from expanding that same hole outwards? At that point it ceases to be a Roman quarry and any evidence of that initial phase would be lost. Furthermore, quarry pits are very hard to get decent archaeological evidence out of as they are not generally immediately backfilled rather, they would be backfilled at a later date with nearby spoil tips or even later agricultural rubbish. I know that a piece of Roman pot was found in 3503 but it was from an upper fill and could easily have been chucked in with spoil at any date. To get decent dating evidence you'd need a thorough sample of the basal deposits of all the pits which would be a hell of a lot of work potentially for nothing if the pits are later and/or over cut or that no dating material is found.

On the basis of the evidence that we have, we know there was quarrying in this location and can speculate that the Romans may have started it, so we have some possible context to the settlement. But I don't really see what further SMS work would tell us about these features without recourse to total excavation and then, I would argue that such a big, expensive job would be disproportionate to their significance when there is a fair likelihood that their final phases are much later, and thus of limited archaeological interest.

Please do let me know your thoughts. Happy to have a chat about this on a call or teams maybe?

I think that the client would be in favour of submitting an overarching WSI or Mitigation Strategy as that has been the approach on other schemes and would allow the archaeological work to progress rapidly.

Kind regards,

Rob

Rob Skinner (he/him) BA (Hons), MA, ACIFA
Associate

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From: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Sent: Tuesday, October 3, 2023 12:45 PM

To: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>

Subject: RE: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

Hi Rob,

Sorry for the delay in getting back to you, I had some annual leave last week. I am happy with the proposed excavation areas and trench locations. I wondered if it would be possible for the areas shown in blue on the attached plan to be subject to Strip, Map, Sample? I am presuming that the areas will be stripped to the natural prior to the construction works commencing, and so if there could be an archaeologist on site to map and sample the extent of the possible trackway in Field 1, and the full extent of the pits/associated features in Field 2, this would be useful for providing context to the Roman and Anglo Saxon features in the excavation areas.

We can certainly agree to include clauses in the conditions and the WSI which would allow development to commence in some areas whilst archaeological mitigation is required in others. Is it intended that an agreed WSI will be submitted with the application as well as the ES? This will mean that there are no pre-commencement archaeological conditions to discharge at the start of the project (agreement of the WSI), and there will only need to be one archaeological condition for the mitigation.

Kind regards,

Victoria

From: Rob Skinner <robs@edp-uk.co.uk>

Sent: 25 September 2023 12:25

To: Green, Victoria - Oxfordshire County Council <Victoria.Green@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Cc: Emily Brewer Rees <emilybr@edp-uk.co.uk>

Subject: edp2355 - Symmetry Park, Ardley

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Victoria,

Hope all is well with yourself. We have been asked to consult with you regarding a possible scope for archaeological excavation for the site at Ardley should the development be consented. We need to agree a scope now so as to be able to update the ES chapter with details on the proposed mitigation (ahead of planning submission at the end of the year) and in order to allow us to understand costs and also to schedule how the works would sit within the development programme which is being worked up in anticipation of planning permission.

You have already seen the evaluation report, but it is available here for reference:

 [AN0619 Symmetry Park Ardley archaeological evaluation FINAL.pdf](#)

Following appraisal of this report and our discussions on site, we are of an understanding that excavation will be appropriate in terms of mitigation and, on the basis of current information, that no preservation in situ is required. It is also understood that the excavation should comprise two areas, one focussed on the Roman buildings and their associated archaeology (in Fields 5 and 6) and the other on the Anglo-Saxon settlement remains found in the southern field (Field 1). It is also understood that we will need to do some further trial trenching in the area that was occupied by a cover crop at the time of the evaluation, just to the NW of the field with the Roman buildings in it, and thus there is potential for excavation depending on what is found.

The attached plan shows two areas suggested for excavation and 8 trial trenches in the cover crop area. Are you able to comment on this approach please?

We would also like to discuss your preferred approach should the site end up coming forwards in phases, i.e. with individual units constructed one at a time. If this is the case then we would be looking to agree a clause in a WSI that would allow development in some parts of the site ahead of the archaeological work provided that the development has no implications for the agreed archaeological areas. Appreciate that we can agree some wording for use in the WSI in due course when the document is worked up.

I look forward to your response,

Kind regards,

Rob

Rob Skinner *(he/him) BA (Hons), MA, ACIfA*
Associate



We're always looking for ways to do things better, so we'd be very grateful if you could complete our very short 2023 Client Survey. [Click here to get started](#) ➔

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Appendix EDP 3
Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action
(Victoria Green, December 2023)

Symmetry Park, Ardley

Design Brief for Archaeological Recording Action

1. SUMMARY OF BRIEF:

- 1.1 This Project Brief provides the outline framework for a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for a programme of archaeological investigation to MORPHE specifications covering a timetabled programme of archaeological investigation, recording analysis and publication as required by conditions on a planning application. This WSI must be agreed with County Archaeological Services in advance of any work being undertaken. Oxfordshire County Council aim to respond to such WSIs within 21 working days.
- 1.2 An initial archaeological field evaluation has established the presence of archaeological features within specific areas of the application site. If the application is approved, conditions will be attached that require a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of the development.

2. BACKGROUND:

2.1 Site Location and Description

- 2.1.1 The development site is located northeast of Junction 10 of the M40, east of the A43, between Baynard's Green and Stoke Lyne, Oxfordshire (Grid Ref 455362 229178). The site is made up of two land parcels which lie north and south of the B4100. The site lies at approximately 115m aOD, and slopes down to the east and south to 110m aOD. The underlying geology is shown as largely the white limestone formation, with Jurassic Forest Marble and Bladon member mudstone and limestone in the central eastern part of the site. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS accessed 2023).

2.2 Planning Background

- 2.2.1 Planning permission has is being sought from Cherwell District Council for the erection of buildings comprising logistics (use class B8) and ancillary offices (use class e(g)(i)) floorspace; energy centre, HGV parking, construction of new site access from the B4100; creation of internal roads and access routes; hard and soft landscaping; the construction of parking and servicing areas; substations and other associated infrastructure. (*planning number 22/01340/OUT*). Due to the presence of archaeological features a condition will be attached that requires that a programme of archaeological mitigation is undertaken during any development.
- 2.2.3 The first Condition will require that a written scheme of investigation (WSI) is approved in advance of the development commencing. The second Condition will require the archaeological mitigation is undertaken in accordance with the approved WSI.
- 2.2.4 This brief outlines our requirements for the archaeological mitigation in order to produce a written scheme of investigation to satisfy the first condition. It is advisable to agree this written specification with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services before submitting it to the Local Planning Authority to meet this condition.

The second Condition will not be met until the final mitigation has been completed and a full publication report produced, and archive deposited.

2.2.5 Where the written scheme of investigation is not produced by the company undertaking the fieldwork then a further specification from the archaeological contractor will need to be agreed in advance of the work being undertaken.

2.3 Archaeological Background

2.3.1 The site is in an area of high archaeological interest and potential, with cropmarks of enclosures known from aerial photographs, and a Roman coin hoard previously found on the site. A geophysical survey confirmed the extent of the cropmark features and further recorded anomalies, concentrated largely in the central land parcels of the development. A subsequent archaeological evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2023) recorded Iron Age settlement remains and enclosures, which extended in to the 1st century. The Romano British remains included a possible villa rustica which dated to the 2nd-4th century AD. To the south west of the Iron Age/Roman settlement area, a group of Anglo-Saxon sunken featured buildings was recorded, dating to the 7th and 8th century AD.

2.3.2 Any tendering organisation should appraise the following documents.

- *Symmetry Park, Ardley, Oxfordshire Archaeological Evaluation* Cotswold Archaeology (2023)
- *Land at Symmetry Park, Ardley, Oxfordshire Geophysical Survey* Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS Report no. 3526) (2021)
- *Symmetry Park, Ardley, Technical Appendix 10.1 Archaeological and Heritage Assessment* EDP Report, edp2355_r014a EDP on behalf of Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd (2021)
- *Junction 10, M40, Ardley, Oxfordshire Geophysical Survey* Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS Report no. 2736) (2015)

2.3.3 Where a project has had an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) produced, in line with an agreed written specification, then this will form the basis of the archaeological background. Where a DBA has not been undertaken then the background will need to be based on data obtained from the Historic Environment Record. There is a charge for this data.

3. OBJECTIVES:

3.1 This integrated programme of archaeological mitigation work has been required in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and has been secured through a negative condition attached to the planning permission. The archaeological works will be carried out in accordance with a Project Design that shall provide a comprehensive mitigation strategy and project planning programme to English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) standard based on clearly defined research objectives.

3.2 The mitigation strategy will seek to alleviate damage to significant archaeological deposits/features, and the developer will be responsible for ensuring this by:-

- a) implementing a full set-piece excavation to deal with all significant remains. If areas of low significance are revealed during the programme these may be dealt with, if agreed by the planning archaeologist, through selective recording action

or smaller scale sampling. This will be determined during the initial site visit following the stripping and planning phase. A watching brief may also be required during construction if deemed necessary on smaller, limited, works such as cable trenches. This would need to be agreed in writing with County Archaeological Services.

b) and where practical and feasible, or where the status and survival quality of the remains is deemed to be of national importance (using the Secretary of States Non-Statutory Criteria), physical preservation in situ.

3.3 The aims and objectives for the archaeological works must take account of the material contained within the Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (<https://library.thehumanjourney.net/2597/>). In particular the themes and questions in the Research agendas for periods should be included where relevant.

This is as required by the Universal guidance for archaeological evaluation, 2023, (ClfA 2023, para 2.45).

3.4 A programme of public engagement will be required, and the mitigation will need to consider a wide range of outreach activities appropriate to the scale of the project. Consideration should be given to site visits from the community and schools as well as public talks and exhibitions. The specification will need to set out the proposed outreach. Where outreach is not considered appropriate then the specification will need to clearly set out the reasons why this is not considered appropriate.

4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

4.1.1 It is possible that the archaeological mitigation of this site will need to be undertaken in two phases. The boundary between the two proposed phases runs through the Iron Age/Romano British settlement area. If this methodology is to go ahead, and when it is known which phase is to be developed first, buffer zones between the two phases will need to be agreed, so that no features are damaged or lost in the boundary area. The buffer zones should also be designed to ensure as many 'whole' features are included in single phases as possible, to minimise the number of features which may be split by the phasing methodology.

4.1.2 Fences should be installed to clearly demarcate the excavation areas and ensure that the areas of the second phase are not impacted on during any activity related to the first phase of construction. These fences should be maintained and inspected during the period between the first and second phase of construction.

4.1.3 The mitigation strategy should outline the methods of ensuring the archaeological excavation across the two potential phases will be consistent, and the timescales anticipated for the phased approach. The second archaeological condition will not be discharged until both phases of archaeological mitigation are completed.

4.1.4 Prior to development the area shown in plans supplied by OCAS to the archaeological consultant will be stripped of overburden under archaeological supervision. The area will be cleaned, and all features will be recorded on plan.

This plan will need to be provided to County Archaeological Service ahead of any site visit.

The following sampling percentages are to provide an indication of the level of sampling that will be required through this iterative approach. The actual sampling levels will be determined following a site visit with County Archaeological Services. Any changes to this strategy will need to be set out in writing by the contracting unit or consultant and agreed with County Archaeological Services in advance of any formal sign offs.

Whilst this brief sets out the archaeological investigation required to meet the planning condition it will be the archaeological contractor's responsibility to ensure that any works are undertaken in line with the site health and safety requirements.

- 4.1.2 All structural features or those relating to a specialised activity will be subject to a 100% sample.
- 4.1.3 All post and stake holes that relate to specialised activities will be subject to a 100% sample. Others will be subject to a 50% sample.
- 4.1.4 All pits will be half sectioned. In some instances, 100% excavation may be requested depending on the nature of the feature/deposit.
- 4.1.5 A minimum of 20% or 10 metres, whichever is greater, of all linear features will be sampled.
- 4.1.6 If burials and or cremations are revealed Ministry of Justice licence under Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 will be obtained. All exhumation and post excavation treatment will be carried out in accordance with published guidelines. County Archaeological Services will need to be informed of any human remains encountered.
- 4.1.7 All kilns and hearths etc. will be sampled and fully excavated.
- 4.1.8 Occupation deposits/stratified layers – needs to identify hand excavation of any stratified layers in 2.5m or 1m systematic and gridded squares to be agreed on the basis of the complexity/extent of such layers with County Archaeological Services. This should include for provision for on-site sieving of occupation levels and/or building fills for small artefacts/ecofacts.
- 4.1.9 No archaeological deposits or features should be investigated by machine without the agreement of County Archaeological Services.
- 4.1.10 All intersections of features are to be examined in order to fully understand date and phasing.
- 4.1.11 Features of possible geological origin should also be sampled until confidence can be established as to their non-archaeological origin.
- 4.2 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) should be submitted to County Archaeological Services for written approval in advance of the commencement of any excavations.
- 4.3 Research aims should be in line with the Solent-Thames Research Framework and should aim to investigate and inform our understanding of the wider historical landscape.

- 4.4 Summary reports of each phase should be submitted in pdf form to the planning archaeologist and the HER in digital form within twelve months of the completion of fieldwork within each phase of extraction.
- 4.5 Provision should be made for taking environmental/organic samples where appropriate. An environmental sampling strategy will need to be agreed between the environmental specialist and County Archaeological Services once the fieldwork is underway
- 4.6 No parts of the excavation areas will be handed back to the developer until written confirmation that they have been signed off is obtained from County Archaeological Services. A post excavation plan showing the features and interventions along with grid references will need to be provided for any sign off areas in advance of this written confirmation.

5. PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION:

- 5.1 All stages of the project shall be carried out in accordance with the procedures laid down in English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE).
- 5.2 The project shall be under the control of a named, qualified archaeologist. The excavation should be undertaken in accordance with the ClfA's Standard and Universal guidance for archaeological excavation, 2023.

[ClfA Code, regulations and standards & guidance | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists](#)

- 5.3 The data collection strategy should be part of a structured academic research agenda based on local and national research priorities. Data management, recovery and recording levels should be clearly defined and should be appropriate to the particular stratified deposits under investigation. This Selection Strategy and Data Management Plan should be specifically set out in the written scheme of investigation.
- 5.4 Include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds and advise, or report on, other aspects of the investigation including environmental sampling and analysis. An agreed allowance should be made for their fees. The WSI should also state that where additional specialists are used then these will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services.
- 5.5 Topsoil stripping, under the supervision of a competent archaeologist, shall be taken down to the significant archaeological horizon in level spits. Spoil will be monitored in order to recover artefacts. Metal detectors should be used to recover metal finds from the spoil.
- 5.6 Appropriate machinery must be used, with an appropriate bucket e.g. a 360° excavator with a toothless ditching bucket/blade. Toothed buckets should not be used without agreement of County Archaeological Services. Choice should be influenced by prevailing site conditions, and the machine must be able to carry out a clean job.

- 5.7 Should any human remains be encountered, they shall only be removed in accordance with the relevant Home Office regulations. OCAS will need to be informed of any human remains encountered.

6. MONITORING AND LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS:

- 6.1 Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services Officers, shall monitor progress and standards throughout the project. To facilitate this, the Project Design will include, in addition to a full projected timetable, staffing details etc.
- 6.2 County Archaeological Services shall be notified of the official start date at least 2 weeks **prior to the commencement of work**, following the agreement of a written scheme of investigation, in order to arrange a date for monitoring visits. A number of site visits will be required and any areas of excavation will need to be formally signed off in writing before any development commences.
- 6.3 A charge of £240 will be made per monitoring visit. This will be charged to the archaeological consultant who arranged the site meeting. If the archaeological consultant or contractor's client wishes to pay this monitoring fee directly, they will need to contact us in advance of the site visit. A purchase order to this amount will need to be provided in advance of the agreement of any site visits and there may be an additional fee to cover the cost of adding them to our invoice system.

7. POST-EXCAVATION/SITE ARCHIVE REQUIREMENT:

- 7.1 All post excavation/site archive work shall be carried out according to the standards and procedures defined in MoRPHE. The post excavation analysis should consider the full range of scientific analysis of the remains including, but not limited to, radiocarbon dating, isotope analysis, residue analysis etc. As the full extent of what may be encountered on site is not likely to be fully understood in advance of the full excavation then the WSI must make clear that this will be assessed by appropriate specialists and reported in the post excavation assessment and updated project design which will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services.
- 7.2 A Post Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design shall be sent to County Archaeological Service for verification and comments unless otherwise agreed in advance with OCAS.
- 7.3 The developer shall be responsible for all processing, research, analysis, and investigative/stabilising conservation necessary to prepare the site archive for preservation and storage in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication. A draft of the publication text will need to be provided to County Archaeological Services for agreement prior to its publication.

8. ARCHIVE DEPOSITION:

- 8.1 The contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that the full integrated site archive including all finds shall be deposited after completion of post-excavation work with the County Museums Service (Oxfordshire Museums) unless another repository is indicated. A Transfer of Title form must be signed by the land owner and the report should clearly indicate whether or not this has been done.

Where such a transfer of title has not been agreed then this may affect the acceptance of the report and the discharge of any planning conditions.

- 8.2 If, during the course of excavation, items are found that may be potentially defined as 'Treasure' under the Code of Practice for the Treasure Act 1996, the archaeological contractor will be responsible for ensuring that the County Coroner is informed. County Archaeological Services and the Finds Liaison Officer will also need to be informed of any possible treasure finds.
- 8.3 Oxfordshire Museums requires that deposited archives from developer-led archaeological work shall be accompanied by funding as outlined in the Transfer. Archaeological organisations shall therefore include an estimate of the costs of deposition for this project in their tender. The estimated cost will be clearly shown and shall be calculated in accordance with the procedures set out in 'Requirements for Transferring Archaeological Archives 2023 - 2024'.
- 8.4 The contracted archaeological organisation will be responsible for ensuring that all digital data generated by the excavation is archived with the [Archaeological Data Service](#) (ADS) and an [OASIS](#) record (Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS) created.
- 8.5 In the event of the legal owner(s) resolving to retain all or part of the site archive, they shall be responsible for the future preservation and maintenance of any material element of that archive. That part of the site archive in question, shall be transferred to the legal owner only after; all necessary processing, research, analysis and investigative/stabilising conservation and correct packing necessary to prepare the archive for preservation and in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication, has been completed. The owner shall ensure that all necessary provision is made for the long-term preservation of the archive in a satisfactory environment, and that it is accessible for future research. The contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that a proper record of material is kept by the landowner shall be included in the written archive and public record. The explicit (written) permission of the owner shall be obtained for the latter in order that the *Data Protection Act 1984* is not contravened.
- 8.6 A draft digital copy of the publication report (either in pdf or .doc format) shall be supplied to the office of the County Archaeological Officer for verification and assessment by the CAO or his representative prior to a final copy being produced or submitted for planning purposes; when the report has been agreed a final digital copy will then be supplied to the County Historic Environment Record (HER), along with a selection of digital images showing the main features, at archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk on the understanding that it will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months).
- 8.7 Details of archive deposition shall be submitted to the County HER.
- 8.8 **GIS (shape) files of the final phased excavated site plan should be provided to the office of the County Archaeological Officer.**
- 8.9 The County Museums Service shall be notified of the fieldwork and an accession number obtained within one month of the commencement of fieldwork and should be informed of the expected time limits for deposition of the archive.

8.10 The accession number should be included in the draft fieldwork reports.

9. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION:

9.1 Full publication of the results should be guaranteed and should take place within a reasonable length of time (normally not more than five years after completion of the work). Style and format to be determined by the archaeological organisation, with regard to agreed standards of archaeological publication, and the house style of the appropriate local, regional or national publication.

9.2 The report should state the location of the archive and acknowledge the curatorial role played in the project by Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services. It should also acknowledge any provision of information from the County Historic Environment Record which is copyright of Oxfordshire County Council. Any secondary reports or articles generated by this project shall similarly acknowledge County Archaeological Services and the HER.

9.3 With regard to publication; the level of the report should take into account the scale of the project, the overall importance of the site based on Historic England guidance, and its status within local and regional research strategies. It should also be commensurate with the level of results obtained. The proposed publication should be set out in the post excavation assessment and updated project design and will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL Contacts

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Responsible for assisting the HER and DC Officers and invoice issues.

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Finds Liaison Officer:-

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Victoria Green
Planning Archaeologist
County Archaeological Services

12th December 2023

Plans

Plan EDP 1: Locations of Archaeological Works - Archaeological Results
(edp2355_d053 12 January 2024 VMS/EBR)

Plan EDP 2: Locations of Archaeological Works - Development Proposals
(edp2355_d054b 20 March 2024 VMS/EBR)

Plan EDP 3: Locations of Archaeological Works - Phased Approach
(edp2355_d055b 20 March 2024 VMS/EBR)

Plan EDP 4: Locations of Archaeological Work – Phased Approach (Archaeological Data)
(edp2355_d056 01 February 2024 PDr/RSk)

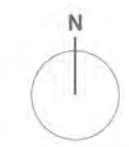


- Site Boundary
- Archaeological Mitigation Area
- Additional Trench

client	Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd		
project title	Symmetry Park, Ardley		
drawing title	Locations of Archaeological Works - Archaeological Results		
date	12 JANUARY 2024	drawn by	VMS
drawing number	edp2355_d053	checked	EBR
scale	1:5,000 @ A3	QA	RBa



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- Site Boundary
- Archaeological Mitigation Area
- Additional Trench

client
Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd

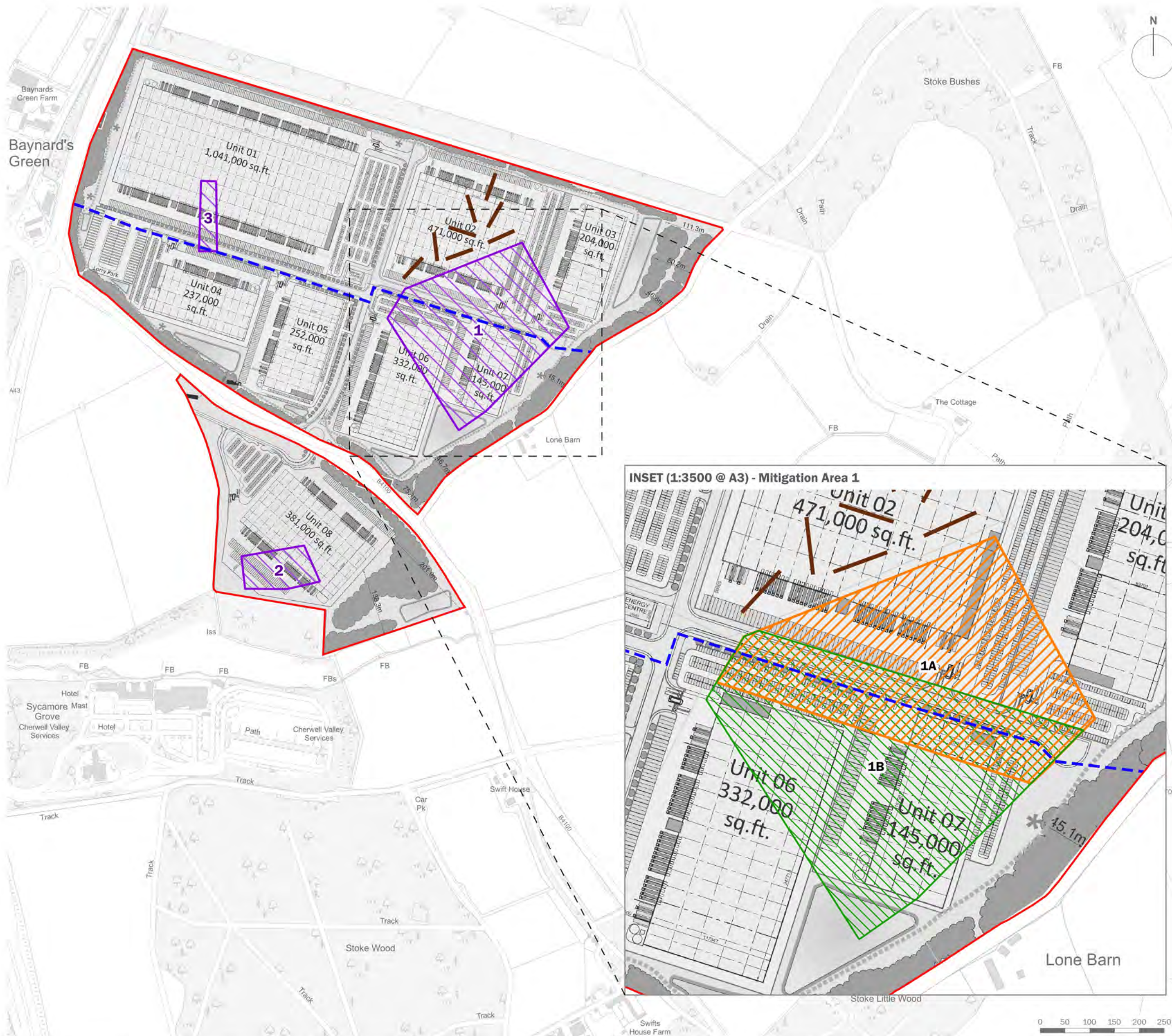
project title
Symmetry Park, Ardley

drawing title
Locations of Archaeological Works - Development Proposals

date	20 MARCH 2024	drawn by	VMS
drawing number	edp2355_d054b	checked	EBR
scale	1:5,000 @ A3	QA	RBa



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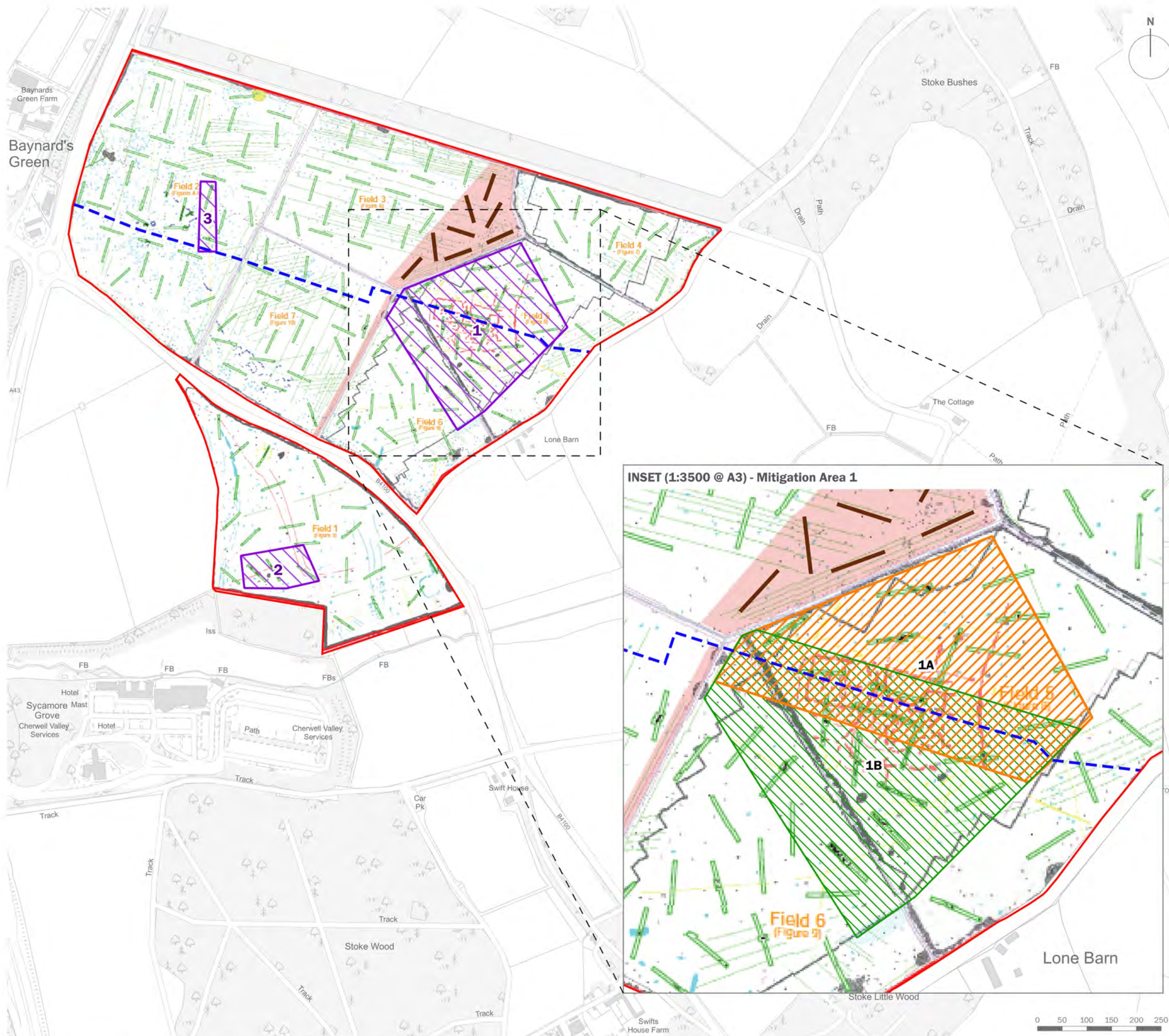
- Site Boundary
- Archaeological Mitigation Area
- Additional Trench
- Phase Division
- Mitigation Area 1 - Phase Division**
- Phase 1A
- Phase 1B

client	Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd	
project title	Symmetry Park, Ardley	
drawing title	Locations of Archaeological Works - Phased Approach	
date	20 MARCH 2024	drawn by VMS
drawing number	edp2355_d055b	checked EBR
scale	1:7,500 @ A3	QA RBa



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-  Site Boundary
-  Archaeological Mitigation Area
-  Additional Trench
-  Phase Division
- Mitigation Area 1 - Phase Division
 -  Phase 1A
 -  Phase 1B

client
Tritax Symmetry Ardley Ltd

project title
Symmetry Park, Ardley

drawing title
Locations of Archaeological Work – Phased Approach (Archaeological Data)

date	01 FEBRUARY 2024	drawn by	PDr
drawing number	edp2355_d056	checked	RSk
scale	1:7,500 @ A3	QA	RBa



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