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

EWR Alliance

# 1.    Summary

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

*Site Details*

| Development Stage | 2A1 |
|---|---|
| Site Name | 2A0061/5.5/FH (Charbridge Lane) |
| Type of Works | Flood Alleviation Area |
| Proposed Archaeological Works | Watching Brief |
| National Grid Reference | SP 60250 23302 (centred) |
| Site Area | 1.5 ha (14,745m$^2$) |
| Chainage | 108600 to 108900 |
| Land Use | Arable cultivation |
| Local Planning Authority | Cherwell District Council |
| Curator | Oxfordshire County Council; Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist (archaeologydc@oxfordshire.gov.uk or 07917 001026) |

*Proposed Archaeological Investigation*

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

*Previous Archaeological Works*

| Type of Work Undertaken | Findings |
|---|---|
| None | None |

[1] EWR Alliance, 2019a. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy.* Unpublished Report. Section 6.6
[2] ibid

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*Archaeological Potential*

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

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## 2. Introduction

This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) sets out a methodology for an archaeological watching brief during works at a flood alleviation area at 2A0061/5.5/FH (Charbridge Lane) ('the Site'). The Site is highlighted within the 'Specific Sites requiring Written Schemes of Investigation' section of the Heritage Delivery Strategy as requiring a WSI for these archaeological works[3].

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

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

The Site is required for flood alleviation. The exact scope of works has yet to be fully determined; however, the Site will likely be completely stripped of topsoil and may require deeper excavations in some areas. The extent of the intrusive works thus means that archaeological mitigation within the Site is required.

## 3. Key Potential

*Prehistoric (500,000BC – AD43)*

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

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

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

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[3]EWR Alliance, 2019. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy.* Unpublished Report Section 8, Table 8.1 Page 8-8
[4] British Geological Survey Website, 2019.
[5] Hardaker, T. (2014) The Lower and Middle Palaeolithic of Oxfordshire. In Hey, G and J, Hinds (eds) *Solent-Thames Research Framework*; Hey, G. 2014. Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic: Resource Assessment. In G. Hey, and J. Hind, (eds) *Solent-Thames Research Framework*
[6] Ibid.

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

*Romano-British (AD43 – AD410)*

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

*Early Medieval (AD410 – AD1066)*

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

*Late Medieval (AD1066 – AD1540)*

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

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

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[7] Lambrick, G. (2014) The Later Bronze Age and Iron Age: Resource assessment. In G. Hey, and J. Hind, (eds) *Solent-Thames Research Framework*
[8] Northamptonshire Archaeology. 2004. *Bicester Park Phase 4, Archaeological Excavation, Assessment and Updated Project Design.* Unpublished report.
[9] EWR Alliance, 2019b. *Compound A1: Land East of Bicester Road, Oxfordshire: An Archaeological Evaluation Report.* Unpublished report.
[10] Ibid

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

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

*Modern Period (Post-1901)*

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

*Historic Landscape Character*

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

## 4.   Previous Works

No previous works have been undertaken within the Site.

## 5.   Proposal for Archaeological Investigations

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

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

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[11] VCH, 1959. 'Parishes: Launton', in A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 6, ed. Mary D Lobel (London, 1959), pp. 232-243
[12] *ibid*
[13] EWR Alliance, 2019. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy.* Unpublished Report

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- 6.11 Finds
- 6.12 Recording & Reporting
- 6.13 Archiving

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

# 6. Archaeological Watching Brief Methodology

The archaeologist will be present to observe all intrusive groundworks associated with the site investigations. Should there be unsupported sections deemed unsafe by the onsite staff, no member of staff will enter the excavated area. In this instance recording of the excavated areas will be conducted from ground level unless shoring has been made available.

In the event that significant archaeological remains are revealed, additional excavation staff are available. The ground work in the location of the archaeology can be temporarily halted in order to determine the extent and character of any remains revealed. The degree of further work will be defined in discussions with the monitoring archaeologist and client. Delays to development can be minimised by continuing to monitor areas of watching brief while the archaeological resource is recorded.

Archaeological recording, where not precluded by Health & Safety considerations, will consist of:

- Hand cleaning of archaeological sections and surfaces sufficient to establish the stratigraphic sequence exposed.

- Structures will be cleaned to enable interpretation, recording and phasing.

- Planning of all exposed archaeological features and horizons (including boundaries of natural) at an appropriate scale.

- Excavated material will be examined in order to retrieve artefacts to assist in the analysis of their spatial distribution.

- A scaled photographic record of representative exposed sections and surfaces, along with sufficient photographs to establish the setting and scale of the groundworks.

- A record of the datum levels of archaeological deposits.

The EWR Alliance Archaeological Manager will be informed as soon as possible of the discovery of any unexpected archaeological remains or changes in the programme of ground works on Site.

Records will be produced using either pro-forma context or trench record sheets compatible with those published by the Museum of London[14], and features will be planned according to the single context method.

A full photographic record will be maintained using a digital SLR camera to produce RAW and JPEG images.

A record of the full sequence of all archaeological deposits as revealed in the evaluation will be made. Plans and sections of features will be drawn at an appropriate scale of 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate. The actual areas of ground disturbance and any features of archaeological interest will be accurately

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[14] Museum of London (1994). *Archaeological Site Manual* (Third Edition).

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located on a site plan and to a known, permanent location. Locations of observations may be surveyed using a differential GPS (Trimble).

Bulk samples, 20 L for wet and 40 L for dry contexts of will be taken from appropriate contexts for the recovery and assessment of environmental data. Provision will be made for column and other appropriate samples to be taken. Sampling methods will follow Historic England guidelines[15].

A metal detector will be made available on site to aid in the recovery of artefacts if required. The detector will not be set to discriminate against iron.

Any finds of human remains will be left *in situ*, covered and protected and the coroner will be informed immediately. If removal is essential a Licence will be sought from the Home Office. The Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Officer will be informed.

Any finds covered by the provisions of the Treasure Act (1996, amended 2003, 2008) and Treasure (Designation) Order 2002[16], including gold and silver, will be secured and preserved in situ until a view can be obtained from the Portable Antiquity Scheme officer.

All identified finds and artefacts will be collected and retained. Certain classes of material, i.e. post-medieval pottery and building material may be discarded after recording if a representative sample is kept. No finds will be discarded without the prior approval of the Oxfordshire County Council's Archaeological Adviser.

Finds will be studied to provide a date range of the assemblage with particular reference to pottery. In addition, the artefacts will be used to characterise the Site, and to establish the potential for all categories of finds should further archaeological work be necessary.

All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner and to standards agreed in advance with the Oxfordshire Museums Service. Finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guidelines set out in United Kingdom Institute for Conservation's Conservation Guidelines No. 2[17].

Provision for onsite conservation and finds treatment, in addition to any scientific dating of materials uncovered, will be undertaken where appropriate.

Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services (OCCAS) will monitor progress and standards throughout the project. The County Archaeological Officer shall be notified of the start date at least two weeks prior to commencement of work in order to arrange a date for the monitoring visit(s).

Upon completion of the project the landowner and the Oxfordshire Museums Service will be contacted.

# 7. Site in the Context of the Research Agenda

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

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[15] Campbell, Moffett and Straker (2011). *Environmental Archaeology. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (Second Edition).
[16] MSO (1996, revised 2002, 2008) *Treasure Act 1996*.
[17] United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, 1983. *Conservation Guidelines No. 2*.

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

- **SRO09:** What is the evidence for pre-Iron Age phases of enclosure, and to what extent were Iron Age and Romano-British field systems and settlement influenced by earlier structuring of the landscape?

- **SRO10:** Can we identify regional patterns in the form, location and status of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements across the route, and are there associated differences in landscape organisation and enclosure? Further, can we detect a decline in mobile domestic activity as the period progressed?

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

- **SRO18:** Can we investigate continuity of local traditions by excavating sites with well-preserved deposits of both Late Iron Age and Roman date?

- **SRO19:** Can we study more Roman settlement types?

- **SRO25:** Identify evidence for late Roman occupation and attempt to identify any continuity in settlement patterns between the end of the Romano-British period and the Early Medieval period.

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

- **SRO29:** Understand the chronology of development and character of later medieval field systems and their relationship to settlement across the region

- **SRO30:** Better understand the character and organisation of later medieval ridge and furrow and field systems

- **SRO37:** Can we understand better the extent of medieval industrial activity and the relationship between agricultural practices and estates e.g. milling.

The ability of any other remains which might be encountered to contribute to the established regional and sub-regional research framework[18] and the SRO's would be dependent upon the nature, condition, extent and significance of the remains. Any such remains, however, could have the potential to contribute to and/or further the understanding the patterns of land use, settlement and/or economy of the period to which they belong. Should hitherto unknown remains be encountered during archaeological monitoring, they should be considered in the context of Section 4 of Heritage Delivery Strategy and Solent-Thames Framework, or any successor document.

# 8.     Report Preparation

Upon completion of the SMS, the stratigraphic record and all excavated material from the Site will be reported on. Within one year of completion of the work on site, these results will be presented as a post-excavation assessment report.

The report will include, as a minimum:

- A non-technical summary containing the essential elements of the results preceding the main body of the report.

- A table of contents.

- An introduction including a list of all staff members involved in the project.

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[18] Hey, G. and Hind, J., 2014. Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas. Oxford Wessex Monograph Series.

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- Summary geological, archaeological and historical background details for the Site.

- A statement of the aims of the project.

- A statement of the methodology of the excavation and an assessment of the same.

- A preliminary archaeological site narrative and account of the phasing based on the stratigraphic record and spot dating.

- Plans and sections at an appropriate scale cross-referenced with the written description.

- Appropriate maps, photographs and artefact drawings.

- A discussion of the location, extent, date, nature, condition, quality and significance of any archaeological deposits identified during the work.

- All finds and environmental specialist reports.

- An interpretation of the results of the excavation in relation to archaeology in the vicinity and an identification of any significance and research implications arising i.e. consideration of the archaeological evidence from within the site set in its broader landscape setting.

- A bibliography of sources consulted.

- Site matrix.

- Context register.

Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, will be sent a copy of the draft report before a final version is produced or submitted to the local Planning Authority. Once finalised, copies of the report (paper & electronic) will also be submitted to be deposited in the relevant HER.

Any significant variation in the project design, including timetables, proposed after the agreement of the proposals must be acceptable to the Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council.

# 9.    Archiving

On completion of the project, an electronic copy of the post-excavation assessment report will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) as per Section 6.13 of the Heritage Delivery Strategy[19].

On completion of the EWR project the archive will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum. An accession number will be applied for from Oxfordshire County Museum. The archive will be prepared in the format agreed with the Museum and following national guidance[20][21].

# 10.    Bibliography

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[19] EWR Alliance, 2019a. Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order: Heritage Delivery Strategy. Unpublished Report
[20] Archaeology Data Service/ Digital Antiquity (2011). *Guides to Good Practice*. Archaeology Data Service, University of York
[21] Brown D H, 2011. *Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation*. Second Edition.

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United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, 1983. *Conservation Guidelines No. 2*.

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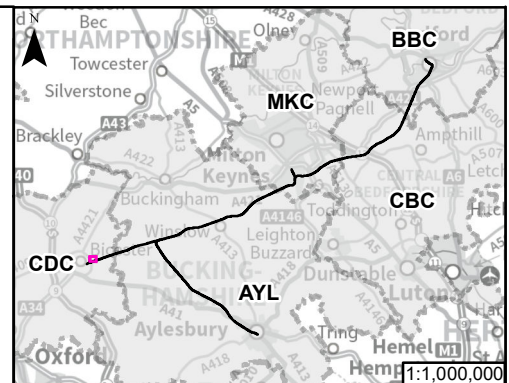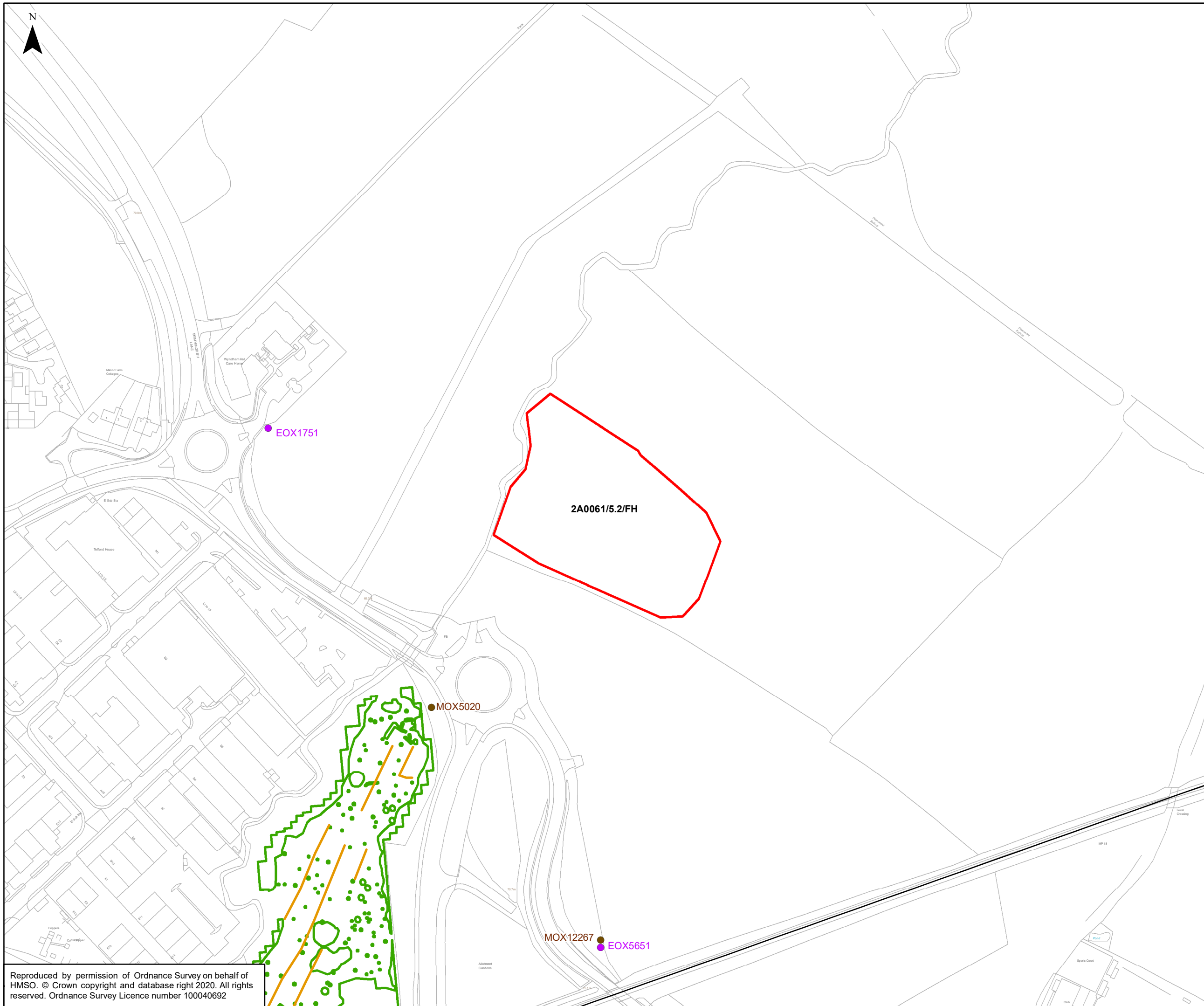
- —— PROJECT EXTENTS
- --- LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY
- ▭ SITE
- ● EVENT
- ● MONUMENT
- —— GEOPHYSICAL INTERPRETATION LINE
- ▭ GEOPHYSICAL INTERPRETATION BORDER

2A0061/5.2/FH

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**EWR Alliance**  
Connecting People

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

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

| | | Signed | | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designed | Krithika S Patwardhan | Krithika P | | 26/02/2020 |
| Drawn | Krithika S Patwardhan | Krithika P | | 26/02/2020 |
| Checked | Kelvin Snell | KRS | | 26/02/2020 |
| Approved | Amy Farringdon McCabe | | | 26/02/2020 |

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