

1. Summary

Development Stage 2A2: Compound A2 Access at Land East of Station Road, Oxfordshire

Site Details

Development Stage	2A2
Site Name	Compound A2 Access
Type of Works	Compound Access
Proposed archaeological works	Strip, Map and Sample
National Grid Reference	SP 61885 23484 (centre of the compound)
Site Area	1.8 ha (17,851m ²)
Chainage	107000 to 1074000
Land Use	Pasture
Local Planning Authority	Cherwell District Council
Curator	Oxfordshire County Council; Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist (archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk or 07917 001026)

Proposed Archaeological Investigation

Archaeological works will comprise a Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) which will involve the observation, investigation and recording of the soil strip within the compound access area. It is important to stress the specified area will be machine stripped under archaeological control to the first archaeological horizon, or to the natural geology where no archaeological remains are encountered. 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 Strategy¹.

Previous Archaeological Works

Type of Work Undertaken	Findings
Geophysical Survey	A magnetometer Survey was undertaken in 2017 by Sumo Services Ltd. ² Widely spaced, slightly curved, parallel linear anomalies were identified across the Site and were provisionally interpreted as being associated with medieval ridge and furrow. Weakly magnetic linear anomalies were also identified which may be associated with former field boundaries.

¹ EWR Alliance, 2019a. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*.

² Sumo Survey, 2017 East West Rail Geophysical Survey Report

Archaeological Potential

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



2. Introduction

This document is a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) setting out a methodology for a Strip, Map and Sample (SMS) during prior to the construction of compound access at Compound A2 Access, Land East of Station Road ('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 works³.

The Site is located within Development Stage 2A2 of the EWR2 scheme (centred on NGR Ref: SP 61885 23484). The Site comprises an irregular parcel of land of approximately 1.8 hectares (ha) located approximately 2km north-east of Launton, Oxfordshire. The Site, which consists of a single agricultural field, is currently open pasture with associated hedgerows and trees. The Site lies within the local authority administrative area of Cherwell District Council.

Topographically, the Site occupies gently undulating land, at approximately 70m AOD. The Site has an underlying bedrock geology composed of the Peterborough Member - mudstone which formed between 166.1 and 163.5 million years ago in the Jurassic Period⁴. A band of alluvium runs along the north-western extent of the Site.

The Site is intended to be used for compound access. 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. This will involve disturbance to the ground, which has the potential to remove or truncate archaeological deposits; thus, archaeological mitigation within the Site is required.

3. Key Potential

Prehistoric (500,000BC – AD43)

There is an absence of evidence for Palaeolithic remains in the vicinity of the Site; there is minimal evidence for Palaeolithic activity within the gravel terraces of the River Cherwell to the east of Bicester, possibly due to the natural geology of the area where alluvial deposits may mask the presence of earlier prehistoric remains⁵. Evidence of Palaeolithic activity within the Site, if present, is likely to comprise artefactual or palaeoenvironmental remains within deeper deposits. There are also no records of assets dating to the Mesolithic period within the immediate vicinity of the Site. There have, however, been several lithic scatters found in archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the Site near Bicester.

No evidence for Neolithic activity is recorded close to the Site. Neolithic remains are primarily based within the Thame valley close to the river's confluence with the River Thames approximately 17km south-west of the Site⁶. The absence of known Neolithic sites may be a result of limited archaeological investigation rather than limited activity during this period. Therefore, there is low potential for remains of these periods to be present.

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. Evidence for Bronze Age activity has primarily been recorded as a result of modern development in those areas and it may be that Bronze Age remains have not been recorded in the vicinity of the Site due to a lack of investigation rather than

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

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 Network Rail, 2018. *Order Environmental Statement. Volume 2ii - Route Section 2*. Available at: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/railway-upgrade-plan/key-projects/east-west-rail/east-west-rail-western-section/>

a lack of activity. The available evidence does, however, indicate a low potential for remains of this period.

Oxfordshire had been subject to extensive woodland clearance carried out in the Middle/Late Iron Age, with environmental data corroborating the rise in open grassland environments⁷. Iron Age enclosed settlement and land management is observable in the wider landscape, with Late Iron Age remains encountered 1.5km west of the Site during trial trenching at Compound 2A1⁸ associated with an Iron Age/Romano-British settlement (MOX12267) previously excavated in 2002. There is deemed to be low potential for Iron Age remains within the Site based on current evidence.

Romano-British (AD43 – AD410)

The Romano-British period saw widespread activity across the EWR route and the wider landscape⁹. 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 west of the Site were found in 2002 during an excavation at Bicester Perimeter Road, c.1.5km 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. 2km south-west 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. During trial trenching at Compound 2A1 in 2019, c. 1.4km west of the Site, the remains of Late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement and land management were encountered which appears to be the northern periphery of the settlement. There is deemed to be a medium potential for remains to be present within the Site.

Early Medieval (AD410 – AD1066)

There is no current archaeological evidence recorded within the Site or surrounding area which dates to the Early Medieval period; much of the activity at that time centred around Marsh Gibbon, c. 2.4km south-east of the Site, and Bicester, c. 3km to the south-west¹⁰. There is deemed to be low potential for Early Medieval remains.

Late Medieval (AD1066 – AD1540)

The manorial estates of Marsh [Gibbon] and Launton are recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) within the Hundred of Mow and based on the Site's current position, c. 1km north-east of Launton and c. 2km north-west of Marsh Gibbon, it is likely that it lay beyond the limits of settlement within the associated ploughlands. This is further evidenced by the presence of ridge and furrow, visible on LiDAR imagery and ridge and furrow visible on aerial photographs in the surrounding area; there is high potential for such remains to be present although these are not visible within the Site itself.

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

Early mapping depicts the settlements of 'Mershe Gibbon', 'Bicester' and 'Launton' in the vicinity of the Site although minimal detail of the settlements or surrounding land is given¹¹. In the late 18th century, more detailed mapping of the Site shows Station Road to the west of the Site, aligned south-west to north-east between Launton and Poundon; no structures are depicted within the Site¹². Ordnance

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 EWR Alliance, 2019b. Compound A1: Land East of Bicester Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire: An Archaeological Evaluation Report. Unpublished report.

⁹ Network Rail, 2018. *Order Environmental Statement. Volume 2ii - Route Section 2A*

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ Saxton, 1574. *Oxonii, buckinghamiae et bercceriae Comitatum.*

¹² Cary, J., 1794. *Cary's England, Wales and Scotland (Sheets 23-24).*

Survey mapping from the 19th century illustrates the Site within a landscape of enclosed fields with the Site shown as either pasture or arable land¹³.

The line of the existing railway, established in the mid-19th century, runs to the immediate north of the Site. The site of Launton Station (MOX5012; SMR Ref: 5870) is recorded located 100 m to the south-west of the Site on the railway line. There is some potential for remains to be encountered which are associated with the construction of the railway line, particularly as the Site is located at the junction of the railway and Station Road and quarrying and landscaping is shown on historic mapping along the western boundary of the Site.

Modern Period (Post-1901)

There has been minimal change to the Site throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, as exemplified by cartographic evidence¹⁴ and aerial imagery. The Site has continued to occupy multiple fields throughout the modern period.

Historic Landscape Character

The present character of the Site can be defined as 18th to 19th century parliamentary type enclosures with a late nineteenth century railway to the north.

4. Previous Works

Sumo Services Ltd undertook a geophysical survey of the Site in 2017¹⁵. The survey recorded widely spaced, slightly curved, parallel linear anomalies across the Site which were interpreted as resulting from medieval ridge and furrow cultivation. Weakly magnetic linear anomalies were also identified which may be associated with a former field boundary, though no such feature is visible on historic OS mapping.

5. Proposal for Archaeological Investigations

The proposed programme of works at Compound 2A2 Access will involve a programme of archaeological monitoring. All works will follow the specific methodologies set out in Section 6 of the Heritage Delivery Strategy¹⁶:

- 6.4 Strip, Map and Sample
- 6.5 Archaeological Monitoring
- 6.6 Construction Integrated Recording
- 6.7 Chance Finds Procedure
- 6.9 Environmental Sampling
- 6.10 Human Remains
- 6.11 Finds
- 6.12 Recording & Reporting
- 6.13 Archiving

¹³ Ordnance Survey, 1815. *Bicester*; OS, 1881. *Oxfordshire XXIII.3*. 25 inch to the mile; OS, 1885. *Oxfordshire XXIII*. Six inch to the mile; OS,

¹⁴ OS, 1900. *Buckinghamshire XXI.NE*. Six inch; 25 inch. OS, 1922. *Oxfordshire XXIII.3*. 25 inch to the mile. OS, 1923. *Buckinghamshire XXI.NE*. Six inch; OS, 1952. *Buckinghamshire XXI.NE*. Six inch; OS, 1968. *OS Plan*, 1: 2,500.

¹⁵ Sumo Services Ltd., 2017. *Geophysical Survey Report: East West Rail*. Job Reference: 11797. Unpublished client report.

¹⁶ EWR Alliance, 2019a. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*. Unpublished Report

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

6. Site in the Context of the Research Agenda

The Heritage Delivery Strategy outline the Specific Research Objectives (SROs) that the work on EWR2 may address¹⁷.

Given the location of the Site within an area of known medieval to post-medieval ridge and furrow, there is considered a high potential for medieval and post-medieval remains, particularly agricultural remains, to survive within the Site. If medieval or post-medieval features or medieval and later ridge and furrow 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
- **SRO39:** How did post-medieval rural industries impact on the landscape, and what was their contribution to society over the period of the urban-centred industrial revolution?
- **SRO40:** What was the impact of the agricultural revolution on the post-medieval landscape?

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?
- **SRO21:** Can we find evidence for Roman burials and cemeteries, ideally in association with parent towns and settlements that can shed light on social organisation?
- **SRO22:** Can we provide new insight into Roman crafts, trade and industries, particularly pottery, ironworking and stone?
- **SRO23:** The Romano-British period saw the beginning of more established infrastructure network. Can we investigate the development of these routes, trackways and roads and the influence they had on landscape change?
- **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

The potential for encountering hitherto unknown remains of other periods is less but cannot be ruled out.

The ability of any other remains which might be encountered to contribute to the established regional and sub-regional research framework¹⁸ 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.

¹⁷ EWR Alliance, 2019a. *Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order Heritage Delivery Strategy*. Unpublished Report Section 4.4

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

7. 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 Strategy¹⁹.

On completion of the EWR2 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}.

8. Bibliography

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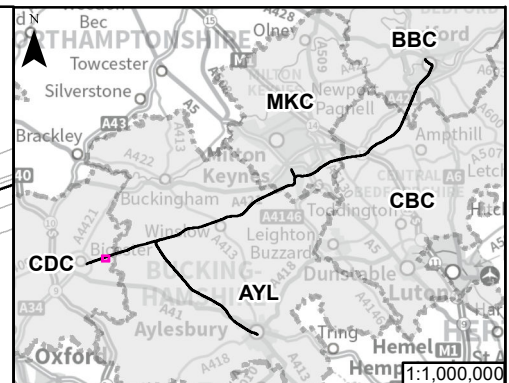
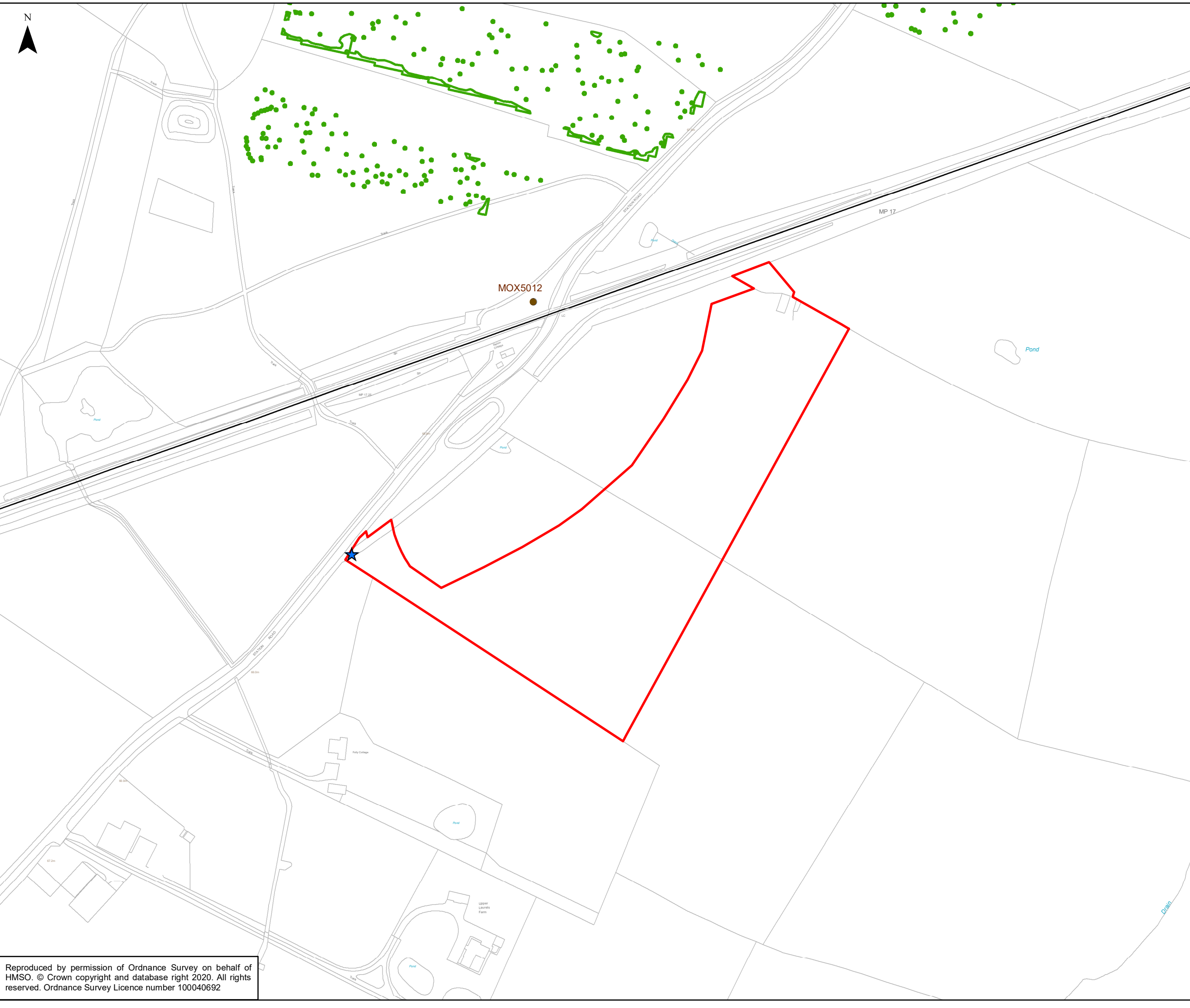
Network Rail, 2018. *Order Environmental Statement. Volume 2ii - Route Section 2A*. Chapter 7, Cultural Heritage.

Sumo Services Ltd., 2017. *Geophysical Survey Report: East West Rail. Job Reference: 11797*. Unpublished client report.

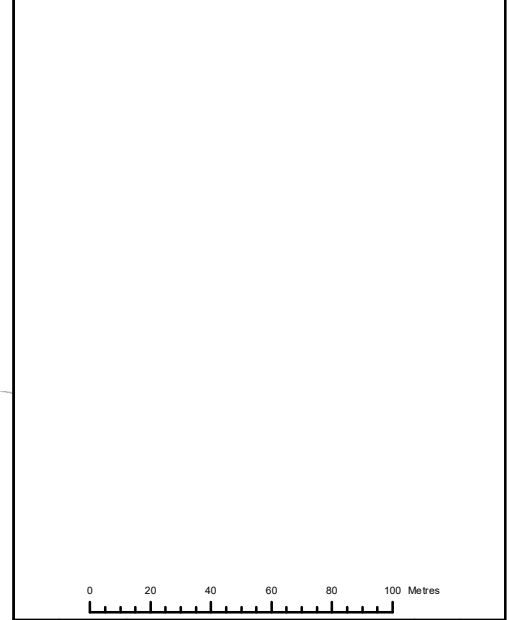
¹⁹ EWR Alliance, 2019a. Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order: Heritage Delivery Strategy. Unpublished Report

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.



- PROJECT EXTENTS
- - - LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY
- ▭ SITE
- ★ CONSTRUCTION ACCESS POINT
- MONUMENT
- ▭ GEOPHYSICAL INTERPRETATION BORDER



P01	19/03/20	FIRST ISSUE	KP	KS	AFM
Rev	Date	Description of Revisions	Dsmd	Chkd	Appr
Status	PUBLISHED - STAGE APPROVED				Suitability A1



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

Drawing Title
FIGURE A2 COMPOUND ACCESS

Designed	Krithika S Patwardhan	Signed	<i>Krithika P</i>	Date	19/03/2020
Drawn	Krithika S Patwardhan	Signed	<i>Krithika P</i>	Date	19/03/2020
Checked	Kelvin Snell	Signed	<i>KRS</i>	Date	19/03/2020
Approved	Amy Farrington McCabe	Signed	<i>Amy</i>	Date	19/03/2020

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

Design Package Risk Classification
NORMAL Sheet
 1 of 1

Alternative Reference
Alternative_Ref Revision
P01

Drawing Number
133735_RW-EWR-XX-XX-DR-LH-010738

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