

Himley Village, Bicester
Archaeological Outline Mitigation Strategy Document
February 2021

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Report

Archaeological Outline Mitigation Strategy Document

Site

Himley Village, Bicester

Date

February 2021

Planning Authority

Cherwell District Council

Planning Application Reference

TBC

Approximate Site Centre

SP 55656 23353

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Report Status

Draft for review

Issue Date

February 2021

Orion Reference

PN2906/1

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1** This document represents an Outline Strategy Document to support a Reserved Matters Application for residential development at Himley Village, Bicester. The Application Site has outline planning permission with a condition for archaeological works. This document is produced to allow Cherwell District Council to make an informed decision about the Reserved Matters Application and refine the scope of works to be included within the final Written Scheme of Investigation. Further consultation with Cherwell District Council's Archaeological Advisor is required prior to the production of the Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 1.2** The Application Site forms part of Himley Village North West Bicester, which received outline planning permission on the 30th January 2020 for: *Development to provide up to 1,700 residential dwellings (Class C3), a retirement village (Class C2), flexible commercial floorspace (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, C1 and D1), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2FE) (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure and other operations (including demolition of farm buildings on Middleton Stoney Road) (OUTLINE 14/02121/OUT)*
- 1.3** The application Outline Planning Permission was supported by an Environmental Statement (Waterman 2014), Desk Based Assessment (Waterman 2014), Aerial Photographic Assessment (Air Photo Services 2010), Geophysical Survey (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012), and Archaeological Evaluation (Oxford Archaeology 2014).
- 1.4** Himley Village, 20.5 ha in size, forms part of the wider outline planning permission. The site is being redeveloped for a mixed end-use comprising 500 residential properties and associated development (Figure 2). The following archaeological conditions has been placed on outline planning permission:

Condition 32:

Prior to any demolition on the site, the commencement of the development and any

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

Condition 33:

Prior to any demolition on the site (other than in accordance with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation) and prior to the commencement of the development and following the approval of the first stage Written Scheme of Investigation referred to in condition 32, a programme of archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording of the application area shall be carried out by the commissioned archaeological organisation in accordance with the approved first stage Written Scheme of Investigation and shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The programme shall be followed throughout the construction of the development.

- 1.5 In line with condition 32 and 33 of outline planning consent, further archaeological investigation will be implemented and will be achieved by means of the following staged scope of archaeological works:
1. Production of a Written Scheme of Investigation
 2. Trial trench evaluation (Figure 5).
 3. Strip, map and sample (Figure 5);
- 1.6 Plans showing the locations of evaluation trial-trenches will be included in the archaeological sub-contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation; this supporting document will also be submitted to Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor for approval.
- 1.7 This Outline Mitigation Strategy has been guided in its composition by the Standard and guidance: Archaeological field evaluation (ClfA 2014a), and the Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (English Heritage 1991), and the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide (Historic England 2015).
- 2.0 Site Location and Description**
- 2.1 The site is sub-rectangular in shape with an approximate area of around 20.5 ha. The site is located on the western edge of Bicester, to the north of the B4030 and south of Himley Farm. Himley Farmhouse and Lovelynch House are located adjacent to the study site. The study site comprises two large enclosed agricultural fields with no building stock.
- 2.2 The study site is underlain by Cornbrash Formation (limestone). No superficial deposits are recorded (GeoIndex 2021). The evaluation report records shallow topsoil and subsoil deposits overlying the natural of approximately 0.25 – 0.43m depth (Oxford Archaeology 2014, v.3 10-25).
- 2.3 The topography of the study site slopes gently from c. 90m OD in the north-west corner to c. 85m OD in the south-east.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1** The study site has been subject to the following previous investigations:
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Waterman 2014) (ES Technical Appendix 15.1)
 - Interpretation of Aerial Photographs for Archaeology (Air Photo Services 2010) (ES Technical Appendix 15.2)
 - Archaeological Geophysical Survey for the Proposed Bicester Eco Development Oxfordshire December 2011 – February 2012 (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012) (ES Technical Appendix 15.3) (Figure 3)
 - Archaeological Evaluation Report Volume 1: Main Report and Appendices (Oxford Archaeology 2014) (ES Technical Appendix 15.4) (Figure 4)
- 3.2** The 2014 archaeological evaluation involved the excavation of a total of 50 50m x 1.8m trenches (trenches 27-76) within two fields in which the study site is located. Of these 50 trenches, 40 lie within the study site itself. This constitutes a 1.75% evaluation of the study site. Of these a total of 10 trenches within the study site contained archaeological remains, these are located in the centre and north-east of the study site. The western and south-eastern trenches contained no archaeological remain.
- 3.3** The following provides a summary of the archaeological features identified within the study site. In summary, an area of Early to Middle Age Iron Age occupation evidence has been identified in the south of the application. This comprises a single, albeit substantial, pit. The remaining features comprise undated linear ditches.
- Trench 36: Undated E-W aligned ditch or field boundary recorded by geophysical survey (s/a tr 55)
 - Trench 45: Two undated furrows
 - Trench 47: Undated NE-SW ditch recorded by geophysical survey.
 - Trench 48: Iron Age pit large 10m across and 1m deep pit. Ceramics all dated to the Early to Middle Iron Age. Corresponded to geophysical survey
 - Trench 53: One E-W aligned ditch, containing heat affected material but no finds.
 - Trench 55: Undated NW-SE ditch recorded by geophysical survey.
 - Trench 69: Two undated E-W aligned ditches
 - Trench 70: Single undated NE-SW ditches
 - Trench 75: Single undated E-W ditch. Corresponds to feature on AP's.
 - Trench 76: Two undated NW-SE aligned ditches towards its northern end.
- 3.4** The 2014 DBA provides an overview of the historical and archaeological background to the study site. Further to this, the 2014 evaluation concluded that the wider Eco village site contained, 'scattered activity dating to the prehistoric period: a single feature contained pottery dating to the Neolithic period, a small group of trenches contained deposits which, while undated, may date to the Bronze Age, and a scatter of features, including a substantial enclosure, contained material of early-middle Iron Age date. There were two main areas of Roman activity, well represented by the geophysical survey as well as a third, less extensive area' (Oxford Archaeology 2014 v.1, 30). With the

exception of the previously discussed Iron Age pit, no significant prehistoric or Romano-British finds or features were identified within the study site itself.

- 3.5** The study site lies south of Hinley Farm which contains two grade II Listed 18th century barns. A review of readily available historic mapping indicates that the study site has been enclosed agricultural land since the late 19th century, containing no building stock (1881-1993 OS Old-maps.co.uk). The 2014 evaluation of the wider Eco village site concluded, 'medieval and post-medieval activity was primarily related to the agricultural use of the area and was widespread across the site' (Oxford Archaeology 2014 v.1, 30). No significant medieval or post-medieval finds or features were identified within the study site itself.

4.0 Aims and Objectives

- 4.1** The principal aims of the Stage 1 archaeological investigation are to:
- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.
 - Establish the nature of the activity on the site.
 - Identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site.
 - Provide further information on the archaeology of the site from any archaeological remains encountered.
 - These results will be used to inform any potential need for further archaeological evaluation or mitigation works, with reference to the research priorities identified within the Solent Thames Archaeological Research Framework (Hey & Hind 2014).
- 4.2** The general objectives of the Stage 1 archaeological investigation are to ensure:
- To define and identify the extent of Iron Age occupation identified in the 2014 evaluation in the south of the study site to inform the final mitigation works;
 - Further investigation of undated linear features identified in the 2014 evaluation within the centre and north-east part of the study site to inform the final mitigation works;
 - To attempt to characterise the nature and preservation of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning and extent of features present on the site;
 - To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence which will attempt to determine the complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy present, and to recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples;
 - To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present;
 - To define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required with particular reference to the Solent Thames Archaeological Research Framework (Hey & Hind 2014); and
 - To establish the significance of the archaeology encountered on site. The objectives of the evaluation are to provide information about the archaeological resource within the site, including its presence/absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality.
- 4.3** Further, more detailed, research aims may be generated from the results of the evaluation and specifically in relation to regional research frameworks (Solent Thames Archaeological Research Framework (Hey and Hind 2014)). These will be reviewed during an on-site meeting with Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor.
- 4.4** This document conforms to the requirements of current national and local planning policy (including *National Planning Policy Framework 2019*). It has been designed in accordance with current best archaeological practice, and the appropriate national and local standards and guidelines, including:
- *Management of Recording Projects in the Historic Environment: MORPHE* (English Heritage 2006);

- *Code of Conduct* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists [‘CIfA’] [revised edition] 2014); and
- *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA [revised edition] 2014)

5.0 Methodology

Programme of Archaeological Works

Stage 1: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

- 5.1** The 2014 archaeological evaluation involved the excavation of a total of 50 50m x 1.8m trenches (trenches 27-76) within two fields in which the study site is located. This constitutes a 1.75% evaluation of the study site. The evaluation identified a single, albeit substantial, Early to Middle Age Iron Age pit in the south of the study site (Trench 48). Nine further trenches in the centre and north-east of the study site recorded undated linear features. The archaeological programme of works will comprise the following:
- A further 3% trial trench evaluation of the central area which contained the Iron Age pit and undated linear features (Figure 5). A 3% sample of this area (53750m sq.) requires the excavation of an additional 18 50m x 1.8m trenches across this area. Further trenching is recommended in this area to clarify the extent of late prehistoric occupation evidence and in form the need for strip, map and sample in its vicinity.
 - A further 1.5 % trial trench evaluation of the north-east area of the study site is recommended to further investigate undated linears identified in the 2014 evaluation (Figure 5). A 1.5% sample of this area (3172m sq.) requires the excavation of an additional 5 50m x 1.8m trenches across this area.
 - Post-excavation research, analysis, report and archive production.
- 5.2** Prior to implementation of the archaeological programme of works, the appointed archaeological contractor will produce a detailed document specifying the methodology, including for example the sampling strategies and specialist personnel to be employed. All work will be undertaken to the satisfaction of Cherwell District Council.
- #### Recording
- 5.3** The areas subject to archaeological investigation will be accurately tied into the National Grid, preferably by GPS and will be located onto a 1: 2,500 map of the area.
- 5.4** Topsoil and subsoil will be machine-excavated using a flat toothless bucket under continuous archaeological supervision to expose the uppermost horizon of archaeological remains or, where absent, the upper interface of geological deposits. Topsoil and subsoil will be stockpiled separately and trenches will be backfilled in reverse order.
- 5.5** The excavated trenches will be cleaned sufficiently to enhance the definition of features and a base plan will be produced at a suitable scale using a Global Positioning System ('GPS').
- 5.6** All structures, deposits and finds will be recorded according to accepted professional standards.
- 5.7** Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features exposed or excavated will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets. Sample recording sheets, sample registers, finds recording sheets, access catalogues, and photo record cards will also be used.

- 5.8** Plans indicating the location of all archaeological features encountered will be drawn at an appropriate scale. The location and extent of archaeological features will be recorded by GPS.
- 5.9** Archaeological features will be plotted on an overall plan at a scale of either 1:100 or 1:50. Areas of significant remains or areas of complex stratigraphy will be planned in greater detail at 1:20 or 1:10 scale as appropriate. Plans and sections will include context numbers and Ordnance Datum ('OD') spot heights for all principal strata and features.
- 5.10** A photographic record of the project will be maintained. The images will illustrate the detail and context of the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the progress of the programme of archaeological works.

Finds and Samples

- 5.11** A high priority will be given to dating any finds exposed. All artefactual and ecofactual material revealed during the excavation will be retained for recording and assessment and, where appropriate, further analysis and will be treated in accordance with the ClfA *Guidelines for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological material* ([revised edition] 2014).
- 5.12** Environmental samples up to 40 litres in volume will be taken from suitable deposits. A sub-sample of the most productive looking samples will be selected by the archaeological contractor's environmental specialist for processing, sorting, assessment and discussion in the evaluation report, with a statement as to the potential for further analysis. The Regional Science Advisor for Historic England will be consulted, as appropriate and Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor will also be consulted on the scope of environmental sampling.
- 5.13** All finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guidelines set out in the UK Institute for Conservation's *Conservation Guideline No 2* (1983). Appropriate guidelines set out in the Museums and Galleries Commission's *Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections* (1991) will also be followed.
- 5.14** Should finds and features be made that might constitute 'Treasure' under the definition of the *Treasure Act* (1996), these will, if possible, be archaeologically excavated and removed to a safe place. Such finds will also be reported immediately to the local coroner (within 14 days, in accordance with the Act).
- 5.15** Any human remains that are discovered will initially be left in-situ, covered and protected. If removal is necessary, this will comply with the relevant legislation, any Ministry of Justice and local environmental health regulations, and the appropriate Historic England advice.

Report and Archive

- 5.16** Details of style and format will be determined by the archaeological contractor. In any event, it will include:

- An executive summary of the work undertaken and the results obtained;
- The aims and methods adopted during the programme of archaeological works;
- The nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any archaeological deposits and material uncovered;
- The nature and location of the features and deposits encountered;
- Appropriate illustrative material such as maps, plans, sections, drawings and photographs; including a site location plan at 1:2500, a site plan at 1:1250, and where appropriate, large-scale specific plans;
- A summary of results; and
- A description of the archive contents and details of its location for long-term storage.

- 5.17** The report will include a finds report, including: all pottery, glass and clay tobacco pipes discovered during the works, as well as all other artefacts that may be discovered. A specialist report on all animal or human bone discovered during the excavation will be included. Pottery and ceramic building material will be recorded by sherd count and weight, by ware type, and if appropriate, from within context groups, in line with the relevant fabric series.
- 5.18** The discussion of the archaeological potential of the site will include reference to the potential indicated by finds and environmental evidence.
- 5.19** A draft copy of the evaluation report will be sent to Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor for comment, prior to a final copy being submitted. Digital copies of the final report will be submitted to Cherwell District Council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the archaeological programme of works. One digital copy of the report will also be provided to the Historic Environment Record ('HER'). A copy will also be uploaded as part of the Archaeology Data Service Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations ('ADR OASIS') database record.
- 5.20** The site archive, to include all project records and cultural material produced by the archaeological works, is to be prepared in accordance with guidance issued by the Archaeological Archives Forum ('AAF') (*Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* [Brown 2011]).
- 5.21** All artefacts and environmental samples will be processed, assessed, conserved and packaged in accordance with local museum service guidelines.
- 5.22** The archive will also be prepared in line with the ClfA *Standard and Guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* ([revised edition] 2014) and in consultation with the relevant Museums Service.

Stage 2: Strip, Map and Record

- 5.23** The evaluation will inform the final archaeological mitigation strategy for the site. Should further works be required these will be covered by a separate Written Scheme of Investigation. A provisional area is provided for a strip, map, record to inform the trench plan (Figure 5).

Consideration of Outreach and Engagement

- 5.24 It is considered that outreach and engagement is not appropriate for this phase of archaeological investigation due to the commercially sensitive nature of the project.
- 5.25 This approach to outreach and engagement will be reviewed and amended, as appropriate, for the mitigation stage of archaeological investigation.

6.0 Timetable and Personnel

- 6.1 The timing of the evaluation is subject to the RMA application and ongoing discussions with Cherwell Archaeological Advisor.
- 6.2 The archaeological works will be undertaken under the overall supervision of Rob Bourn (Director, Orion Heritage) and Helen MacQuarrie (Senior Consultant, Orion Heritage). Rob is a ClfA Member and Orion Heritage is a Registered Archaeological Organisation with ClfA. The archaeological contracting organisation appointed to implement the works detailed in this WSI, will be a Registered Archaeological Organisation with ClfA.
- 6.3 Curriculum Vitae of key personnel will be provided to Cherwell District Council in advance of the archaeological works commencing, if required.

7.0 Monitoring

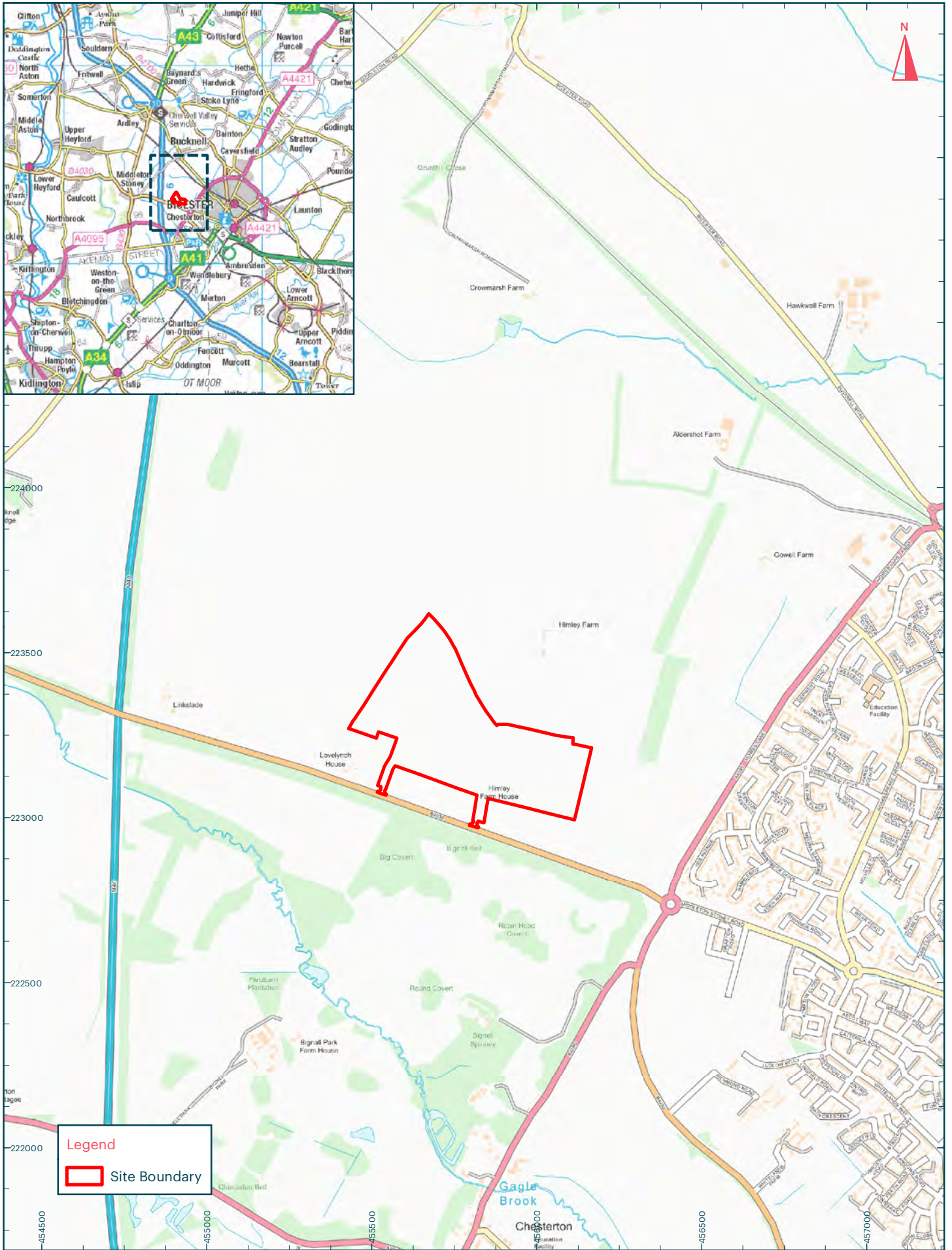
- 7.1 The aim of monitoring is to ensure that the archaeological works are undertaken within the limits set out in this WSI, and to the satisfaction of Cherwell District Council.
- 7.2 Helen MacQuarrie (Senior Consultant, Orion Heritage) will monitor the implementation of the archaeological works on behalf of the developers.
- 7.3 Representatives from the Cherwell District Council will monitor the evaluation and ten working days' notice will be given to arrange a site meeting.
- 7.4 It is understood that a planning charge will be made to cover attendance of the monitoring meetings by Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor.
- 7.5 No evaluation trench is to be backfilled until the archaeological works have been signed off, either by a site visit or by email confirmation, by the Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor.
- 7.6 Any alterations to this document should be agreed in writing with the relevant parties prior to commencement of on-site works, or at the earliest available opportunity thereafter.

8.0 Insurance

- 8.1 Both Orion Heritage and the appointed archaeological contractor can produce evidence of Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance.

9.0 Health and Safety

- 9.1 All works will follow the *Health and Safety at Work Act* (1974), applicable regulations and codes of practice, and recommendations of the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers ('SCAUM') *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology* (1986).
- 9.2 All archaeological staff will undertake their operations with safe working practices.
- 9.3 All staff will be made aware of the hazards and any necessary measures which need to be taken regarding those hazards.
- 9.4 A site-specific Risk Assessment will be prepared by the appointed archaeological contractor.



Title:
 Figure 1: Site Location
Address:
 Himley Village

Scale at A4: 1:15,000



Legend

Site Boundary

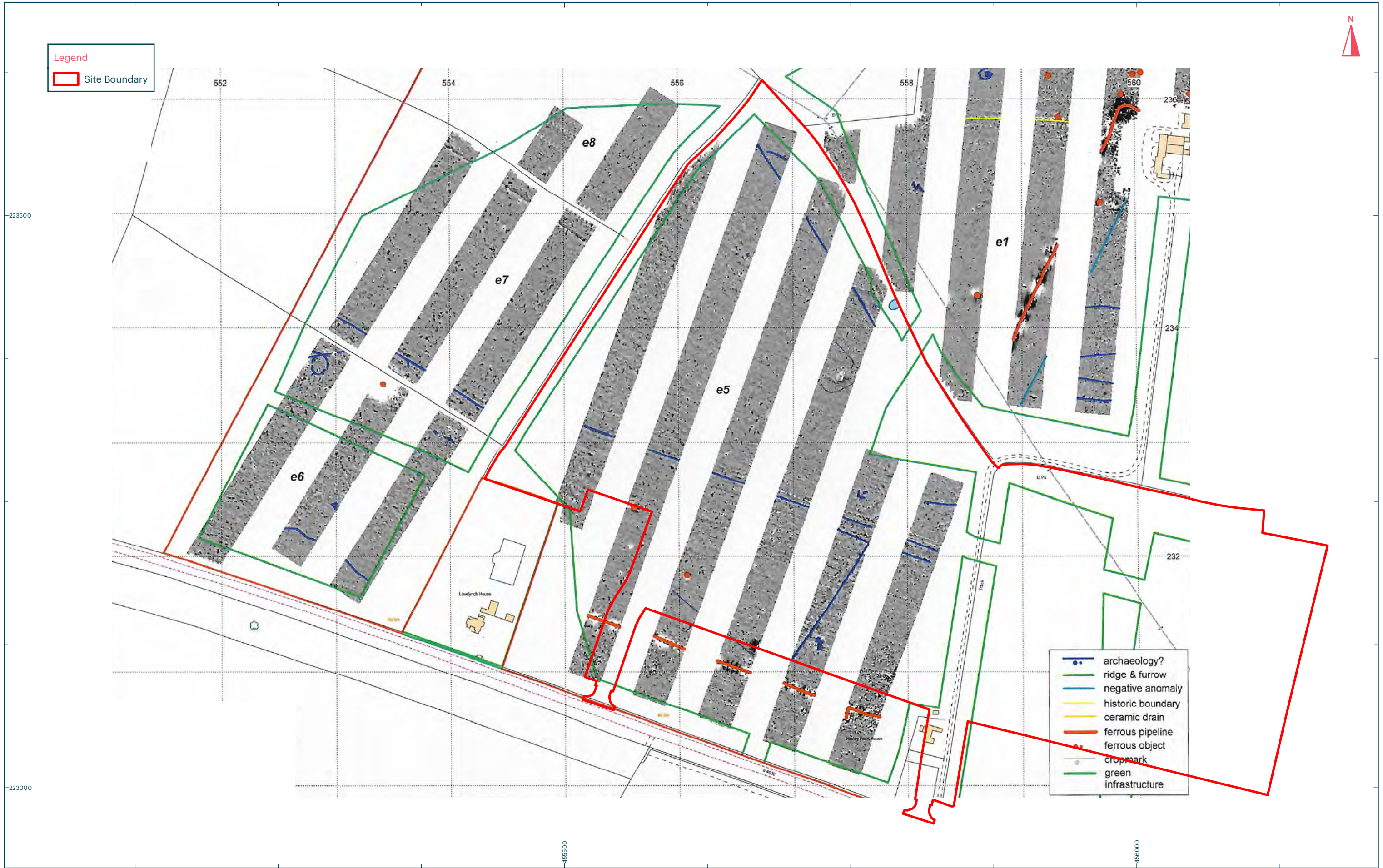


Title:
Figure 2: Proposed Layout

Address:
Himley Village

Scale at A3: 1:3,000

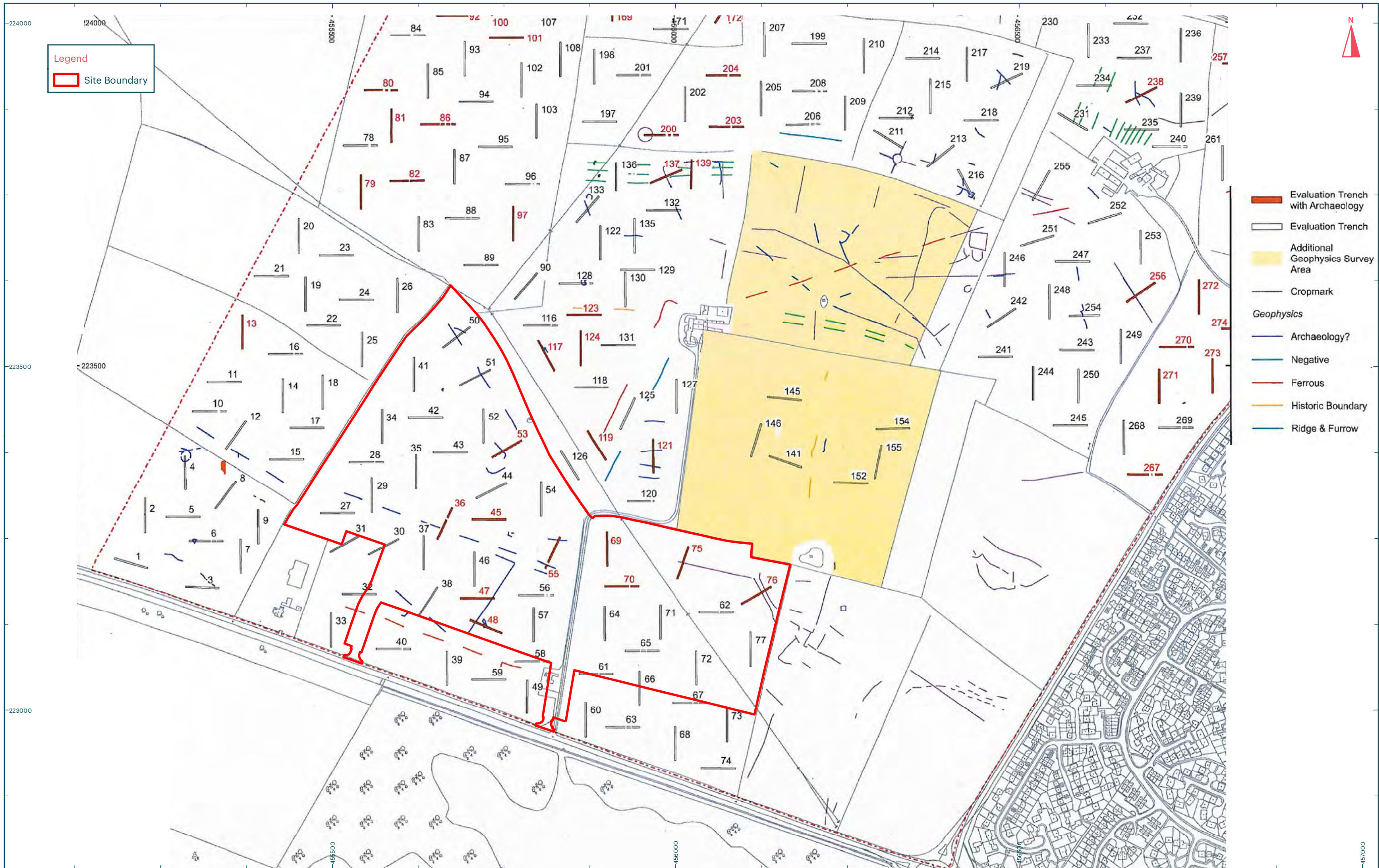




Title:
Figure 3: Geophysical Survey Results and Interpretation (Northamptonshire Archaeology 2014)
Address:
Himley Village

Scale at A3: 1:3,000
0 100m





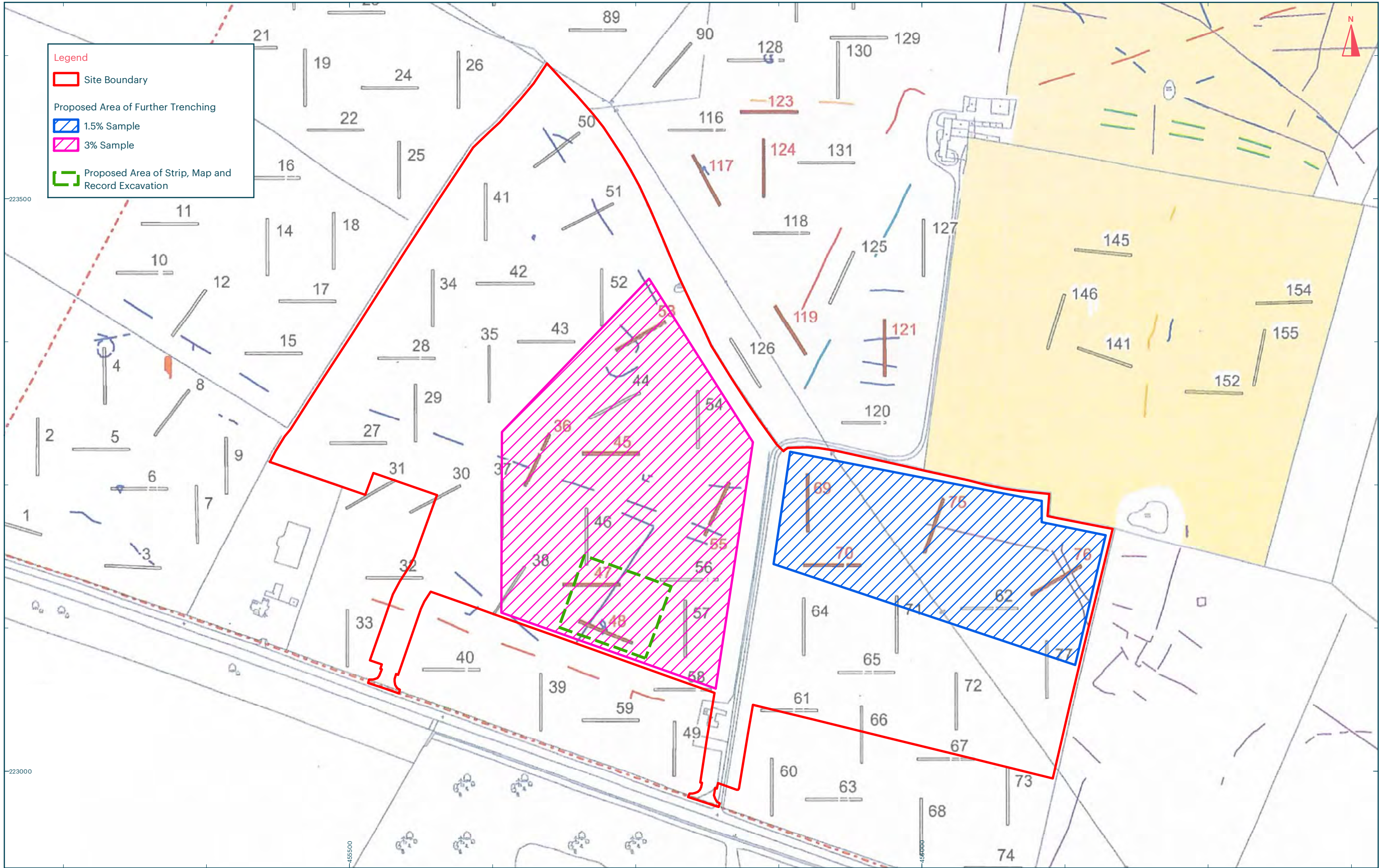
Title:
Figure 4: 2014 Oxford Archaeology Trench Plan

Address:
Himley Village

Scale at A3: 1:5,000

0 150m





Legend

- Site Boundary
- 1.5% Sample
- 3% Sample
- Proposed Area of Strip, Map and Record Excavation

Title:
Figure 5: Proposed programme of archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording

Address:
Himley Village

Scale at A3: 1:3,000



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