

Land west of Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris
Archaeological Mitigation Written Scheme of Investigation
May 2021

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Report

Archaeological Mitigation Written Scheme of Investigation

Site

Land west of Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris

Date

May 2021

Planning Authority

Cherwell District Council

Approximate Site Centre

NGR 435500, 237102

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 This document represents a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for undertaking a phase of mitigation excavation at land west of Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris (hereafter referred to as the 'site'). The site is centred on NGR 435500, 237102 (Fig.1).
- 1.2 The site has outline permission (granted on appeal 23rd December 2019) for up to 25 dwellings, associated open space and sustainable drainage (all matters reserved); (Appeal Reference: APP/C3105/W/19/3229631).
- 1.3 There is one condition attached to outline permission in relation to archaeology:

Condition 13

Prior to or as part of the submission of the first reserved matter a Written Scheme of Archaeological Investigation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions:

- i) the programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;*
- ii) the programme for post investigation assessment;*
- iii) the provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording;*
- iv) the provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation;*
- v) the provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation;*
- vi) the nomination of a competent person or persons/organization to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.*

- 1.4 Submission to and approval by Cherwell District Council of this Written Scheme of Investigation will allow Condition 13 to be formally discharged. It is noted that a detailed method statement will also be prepared by the appointed archaeological subcontractor and will be agreed with Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor.
- 1.5 The site has been subject to desk-based assessment (Orion Heritage 2018), geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys 2019) and archaeological evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2019). These three reports inform this written scheme of investigation and should be read in conjunction with this document.
- 1.6 The evaluation report states:

The evaluation identified a concentration of archaeological remains within the eastern part of the site, with a lower density of archaeological remains within the southern part of the site. Where archaeological features were encountered during the current trenching there was a good correlation with the results of the geophysical survey, although a few anomalies could not be located within the evaluation trenches.

The earliest identified features comprised ditches forming elements of an enclosure (Enclosure 1) and a large boundary ditch, along with further isolated pits and a ditch, which contained pottery of broadly Middle to Late Iron Age date. The evidence indicates domestic settlement within the Iron Age, concentrated in the eastern part of the site. Further limited evidence for Roman occupation associated with a second enclosure (Enclosure 2) was also identified.

A further large, undated, possible enclosure (Enclosure 3) was identified in the eastern part of site, along with pits and ditches further indicating settlement activity. The relationship between intercutting Enclosures 2 and 3 was not established during the evaluation, however, their positioning suggests they were not contemporary. Excluding Enclosure 3, the varying alignments of the prehistoric features depicted on the geophysical survey, appear to respect one another spatially and appear to indicate an organic development to the site, taking place over a period of time, although no complexity or apparent longevity was identified within the fills of the features themselves.

Plough furrows, the remains of the open field system that once surrounded the village of Sibford Ferris, although indicated on the geophysical survey, were not identified during the evaluation.

- 1.7** A plan showing the location of the proposed mitigation area is included as Figure 2 (with the evaluation results and development layout overlaid); this is informed by the geophysical survey and by the evaluation trial-trenching results of 2019.
- 1.8** The mitigation area comprises archaeological activity which is focussed within the eastern part of the site where the consented new build is located and where groundworks will impact on the underlying archaeological features. The mitigation area includes parts of open space where enclosure activity and associated features extend into these areas. It is noted that geophysical survey recorded a northeast – west aligned linear extending beyond the mitigation area; this feature was not recorded in evaluation Trenches 4 or 7. A second east – west aligned linear was recorded in Trenches 1, 3, 6 and 8; where the linear extends westwards it is located within an area of public open space with tree planting. Evaluation recorded that the feature was sealed by a minimum 500mm depth of ploughsoil and subsoil; this depth, along with careful placement of the tree planting, will allow this feature to remain undisturbed. Elsewhere within the western half of the site, Trenches 2, 4, 5 and 15 recorded no archaeological activity. Also in the southernmost part of the site Trench 9 recorded no archaeological activity. Given the depth of ploughsoil and subsoil recorded in this western and southern open space area, any archaeological features not recorded by the evaluation would remain in situ and these areas are therefore not included within the mitigation excavation area.
- 1.9** It is noted that the density of recorded features appears to be lower within the eastern and southeastern parts of the mitigation area; the methodology within these parts of the mitigation area may be refined as the archaeological investigation progresses; any refinements will be agreed formally with Richard Oram, Cherwell District Council’s archaeological advisor prior to implementation.
- 1.10** No development will be undertaken on the site until the archaeological mitigation excavation has been agreed with and signed off by Cherwell District Council’s archaeological advisor.
- 1.11** It is noted that a Western Power overhead extends east – west across the northernmost part of the proposed mitigation area, with a second overhead located to the west on a north – south alignment; the client will gain permission for works and safety measures for working beneath the power lines will be in place prior to commencement of the mitigation investigation.
- 1.12** A contingency of 5m x 10m is to be set aside against the need to target specific areas of the site in the light of the investigation results.

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1.13 Stockpiling of spoil will be carefully planned to avoid any need for double-handling and to allow the mitigation area to be extended or refined, as required.

1.14 There are no known ecological constraints.

1.15 There is a series of mature trees along the northern boundary and it is noted that the mitigation area may need to respect tree root protection areas here.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

2.1 The principal aims of the archaeological excavation are to:

- Determine the presence/absence, character, extent, date, complexity, integrity, state of preservation and quality of any archaeological remains present, therefore ensuring their preservation by record.

2.2 The general objectives are to ensure:

- The protection and recording of archaeological assets discovered during the archaeological excavation;
- That any below-ground archaeological deposits exposed are promptly identified; and
- The recording of archaeological remains, to place this record in its local context and to make this record available.

2.3 Further, more detailed, research aims may be generated from the results of the excavation, specifically in relation to regional research frameworks (Solent-Thames: Research Framework for the Historic Environment (Oxford Wessex Monograph No. 6 2014). These will be reviewed during an on-site/digital meeting with Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor.

2.4 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 Excavation* (CIfA [revised edition] 2014).

3.0 Methodology

Programme of Archaeological Works

- 3.1 The archaeological mitigation excavation area extent is shown on Figure 2.
- 3.2 A contingency of 5m x 10m will be held to target specific areas of the site, if required.
- 3.3 Post-excavation research, analysis, report and archive production and archive deposition form an integral part of the mitigation works.
- 3.4 It is noted in relation to the lesser density of recorded features within the southeastern part of the mitigation area that the methodology may be refined as the archaeological investigation progresses; any amendments must be agreed formally with Richard Oram, Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor prior to implementation.
- 3.5 Stockpiling of spoil will be carefully planned to avoid any need for double-handling.
- 3.6 Prior to implementation of the mitigation excavation, the appointed archaeological contractor will produce a detailed method statement specifying the sampling strategies and specialist personnel to be employed. All work will be undertaken to the satisfaction of Cherwell District Council.

Recording

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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, if required, the mitigation area will be backfilled in reverse order.
- 3.9 The excavated mitigation area 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').
- 3.10 All structures, deposits and finds will be recorded according to accepted professional standards.
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 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.

- 3.14** 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.
- 3.15** A survey plan of the mitigation area, including proposed and completed interventions, will be provided to the County Archaeology Service in advance of each site visit.
- 3.16** The following sampling percentages are to provide an indication of the level of sampling that will be required through this WSI's approach. The actual sampling levels will be determined following a site visit with County Archaeological Services. Any changes to this strategy should be subject to the agreement of County Archaeological Services and the Project Manager of the archaeological contractor undertaking the recording.
- 3.17** All structural features or those relating to a specialised activity will be subject to a 100% sample.
- 3.18** 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.
- 3.19** A 50% sample of all pits will be undertaken.
- 3.20** A minimum of 20% or 10 metres, whichever is greater, of all linear features will be sampled.
- 3.21** 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.
- 3.22** All kilns and hearths will be sampled and excavated.
- 3.23** All gold or silver artefacts will be reported to the Coroner in line with the Treasure Act 1996.
- 3.24** A detailed method statement prepared by the appointed archaeological contractor will be submitted to the County Archaeology Service for written approval in advance of the commencement of any excavation.
- 3.25** Research aims will be in line with the Solent-Thames Research Framework and will aim to investigate and inform our understanding of the wider historical landscape.
- 3.26** Summary reports of each phase will 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.
- 3.27** It is noted that no part of the excavation area will be handed back to the developer until written confirmation that they have been signed off is obtained from County Archaeological Service. 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.

Finds and Samples

- 3.28** 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 CIFA *Guidelines for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological material* ([revised edition] 2014).
- 3.29** 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 excavation 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.
- 3.30** It is noted that the County Archaeology Service require an environmental statement to be submitted for the mitigation excavation which will set out what will be sampled following a site visit by the archaeological subcontractor's environmental specialist; this environmental statement will need to be agreed prior to any areas of the site being signed off. This environmental statement will be included within the archaeological sub-contractor's detailed method statement/written scheme of investigation. The environmental statement may be submitted to Historic England for review and approval.
- 3.31** 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.
- 3.32** 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 be reported immediately to the local coroner (within 14 days, in accordance with the Act) and will also be reported immediately to the County Archaeology Service.
- 3.33** Human remains encountered during the mitigation excavation will be removed in compliance with the relevant legislation, any Ministry of Justice and local environmental health regulations, and the appropriate Historic England advice. The County Archaeology Service will be notified and consulted immediately.

Report and Archive

- 3.34** The mitigation excavation will require a post-excavation assessment which will be agreed with the County Archaeology Service before the post-excavation analysis is completed and before a final report is produced or submitted to the planning case officer.
- 3.35** 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.
- 3.36** 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.
- 3.37** The discussion of the archaeological significance of the site will include reference to the significance indicated by finds and environmental evidence.
- 3.38** Publication of the excavation results (even if limited to one line reports on work done with negative results) will be undertaken. This will be completed within a reasonable length of time and certainly within five years after completion of the excavation. The style and format of the publication report will be determined by the archaeological sub-contractor; it will be in line with agreed standards of archaeological publication and will be in line with the house style of the appropriate local, regional or national publication.
- 3.39** A draft copy of the excavation 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.
- 3.40** 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]).
- 3.41** Subject to landowner agreement, the archive will be deposited with the County Museum Resource Centre at Standlake. The Museum's guidance in relation to archives should be abided by and an accession number should be obtained.
- 3.42** 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.

Consideration of Outreach and Engagement

- 3.43** It is intended that the appointed archaeological contractor will host at least one open day whilst the mitigation excavation is in progress and that a small number of workshops will be held in conjunction with the local school. These events will adhere to all current Covid guidelines.
- 3.44** Press releases will also be prepared throughout the mitigation excavation.
- 3.45** Information will be further disseminated via OASIS, the County Historic Environment Record and via publication.

4.0 Personnel

- 4.1** The archaeological works will be undertaken under the overall supervision of Cathy Patrick (Technical Director, Orion Heritage). Cathy is a ClfA Member (Membership Number 1567); 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.
- 4.2** Curriculum Vitaes of key personnel will be provided to Cherwell District Council in advance of the archaeological works commencing, if required.

5.0 Monitoring

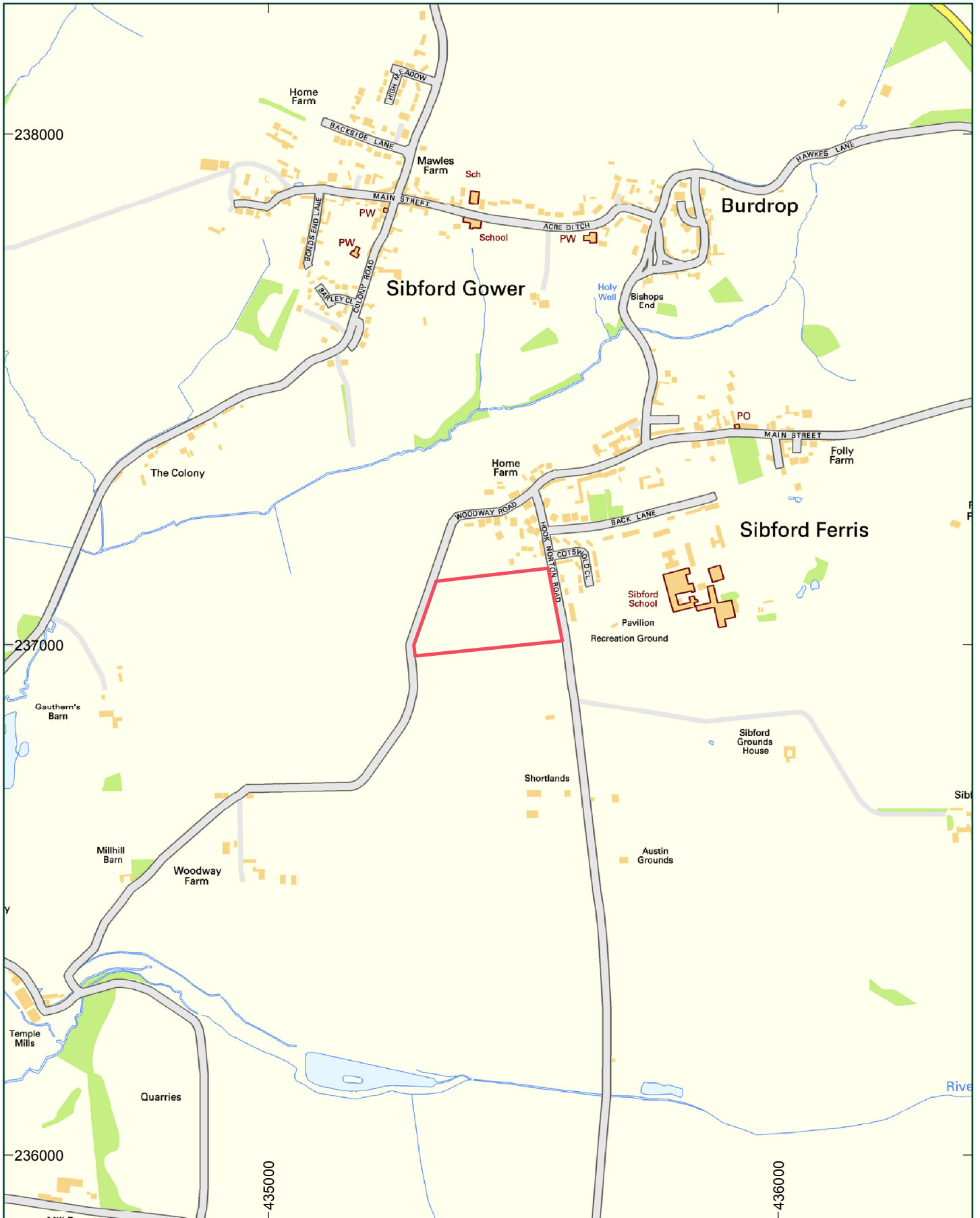
- 5.1 The aim of monitoring is to ensure that the archaeological works are undertaken within the limits set out in this WSI, and to the satisfaction of Cherwell District Council.
- 5.2 Cathy Patrick (Technical Director, Orion Heritage) will monitor the implementation of the archaeological works on behalf of the developers.
- 5.3 Representatives from the Cherwell District Council will monitor the mitigation excavation and ten working days' notice will be given to arrange a site meeting (if Covid restrictions are re-introduced this meeting may be undertaken digitally or an email exchange supported by photographic evidence will be undertaken).
- 5.4 It is understood that a planning charge will be made to cover attendance of the monitoring meetings by Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor.
- 5.5 No part of the mitigation excavation area is to be backfilled until the archaeological works have been signed off, either by a site visit or by email confirmation, by Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor.
- 5.6 No part of the site will be handed over to the developer until written confirmation has been received from Cherwell District Council's archaeological advisor that the archaeological mitigation excavation has been completed and that the areas have been signed off. A post-excavation plan showing the features and interventions, along with grid references, will be provided to support this written confirmation.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 Regular emails will be provided, with photos and text, to demonstrate progress and to allow monitoring of the archaeological excavation.
- 5.9 A site survey, including completed and proposed interventions, will be sent to the County Archaeology Service prior to any physical or digital site monitoring meeting.

6.0 Insurance

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

7.0 Health and Safety

- 7.1 All works will follow the *Health and Safety at Work Act* (1974), applicable regulations and codes of practice, recommendations of the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers ('SCAUM') *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology* (1986) and *Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015*.
- 7.2 All archaeological staff will undertake their operations with safe working practices.
- 7.3 All staff will be made aware of the hazards and any necessary measures which need to be taken regarding those hazards.
- 7.4 A site-specific Risk Assessment will be prepared by the appointed archaeological contractor.
- 7.5 Particular care will be taken to adhere to all Covid guidelines; daily checks for updated guidance will be undertaken.



Legend
 Site

1:10,000 at A4



Title:
 Fig. 1: Site Location

Address:
 Land west of Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris



orion.

Legend

Site Boundary



- Evaluation trench
- Archaeological feature
- 30m buffer around SZTT

- Geophysical survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2019)
- Archaeology probable (strong)
- Archaeology probable (weak)
- Archaeology probable (spread)
- Archaeology possible (strong)
- Archaeology possible (weak)
- Agricultural (weak)
- Natural (strong)
- Natural (weak)
- Magnetic disturbance
- Ferrous/debris (spread)
- Ferrous (spike)
- Agricultural (trend)
- Service

Title:
Proposed Development with Archaeological Features

Address:
Land west of Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris

