

APPENDIX 11.2
COTSWOLD ARCHAEOLOGY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Land at North West Bicester Bicester Oxfordshire

Archaeological Assessment

Appendix 11.2



Report prepared for:
Firethorn Bicester Ltd

CA Project: MK0303

CA Report: MK0303_01

April 2021



Land at North West Bicester Bicester Oxfordshire

Archaeological Assessment

Appendix 11.2

CA Project: MK0303

CA Report: MK0303_01

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date	August 2020
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date	March 2021
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date	April 2021
issue	1

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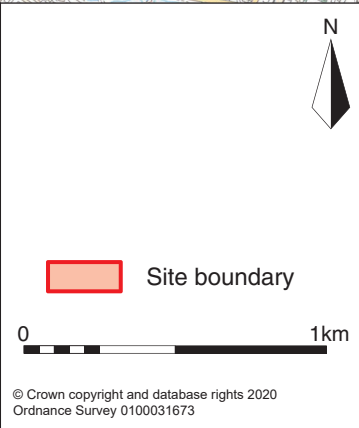
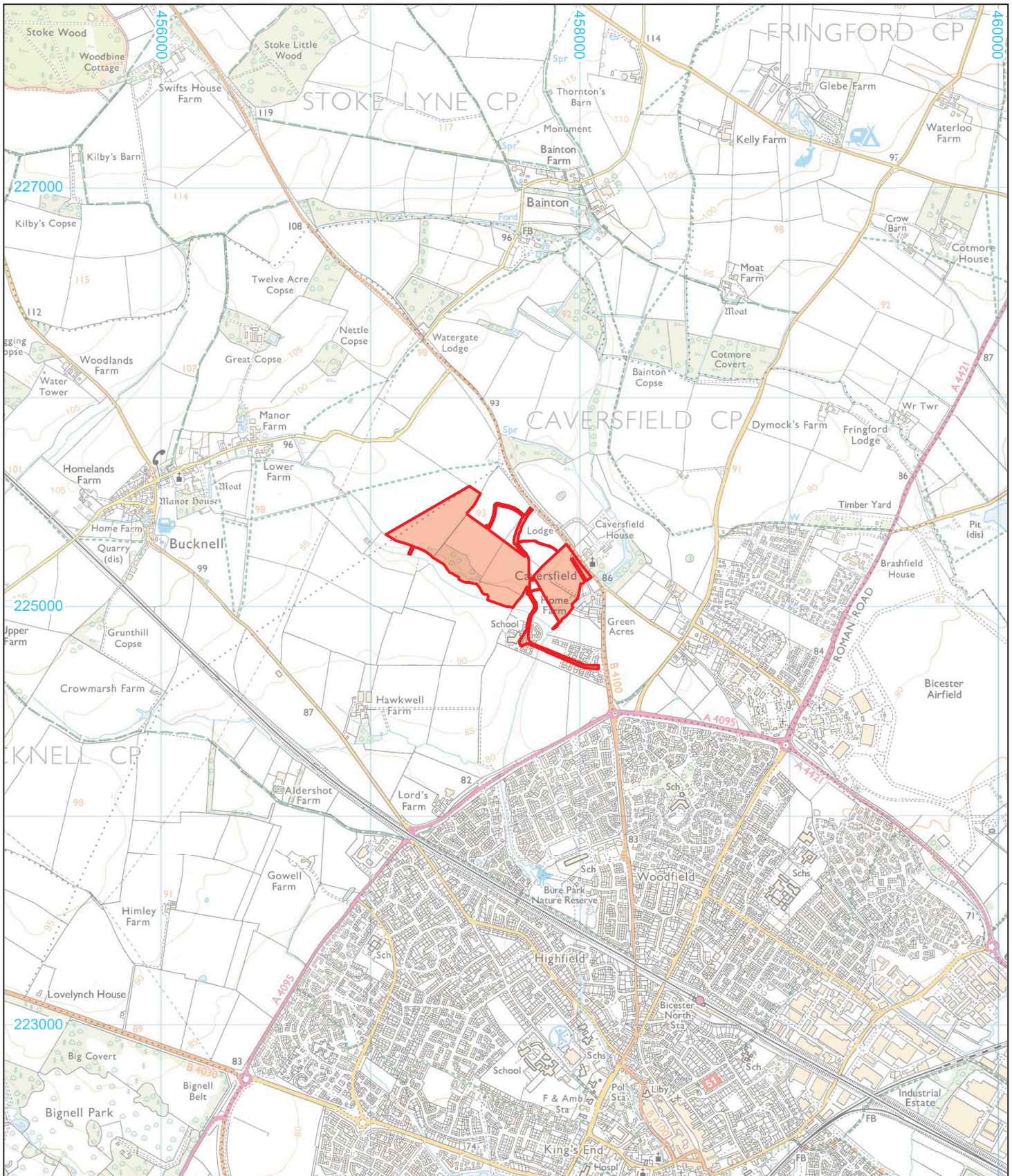
SUMMARY

Project Name: Land at North West Bicester
Location: Bicester, Oxfordshire
NGR: (centred on) 457582, 225230

In August 2020 Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Firethorn Bicester Ltd to produce an Archaeological Assessment of Land at North West Bicester, Oxfordshire. The Site forms part of the allocated Bicester Eco Town development area to the north of the railway (Application 1). This Assessment was informed exclusively by reports of previous archaeological investigations of the Site, including the results of the archaeological evaluation carried out as part of the Bicester Eco Town development.

This Assessment has identified no overriding archaeological results that would preclude development and a mitigation plan has been agreed by Mr Richard Oram, the Planning Archaeologist to Oxfordshire County Council, for the north-western portion of the Site. The mitigation area focusses on the potential for later prehistoric remains identified by the archaeological evaluation, aerial photograph analyses and geophysical survey. The south-eastern portion of the Site, comprising the remains of early to late medieval activity, requires no further archaeological mitigation prior to approval of the planning application, as agreed by Mr Oram.

This Assessment has been produced in accordance with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Local Policy.



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PROJECT TITLE
 Land at North West Bicester, Bicester
 Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In August 2020 Cotswold Archaeology was commissioned by Firethorn Bicester Ltd to produce an Archaeological Assessment in respect of Land at North West Bicester, Oxfordshire (hereafter referred to as ‘the Site’). The Site is currently under pasture and forms part of the Eco Town development area to the north-west of Bicester (NGR: 457582, 225230; Fig. 1).
- 1.2. This Assessment addresses the known archaeological resource of the Site identified from previous archaeological investigations of the Site (Air Photo Services 2010; Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012; Oxford Archaeology 2014; Magnitude Surveys 2018; MOLA 2018).
- 1.3. Several cultural heritage desk-based assessments have previously been undertaken in relation to the Site and other elements of the Eco Town development, examining both the archaeological resource and nearby built heritage assets. The results of these studies fed into the various stages of intrusive investigation and has not been repeated here. Furthermore, no review of the data held by the Oxfordshire HER was made to inform this Assessment.
- 1.4. The Site has undergone previous consultation as part of planning applications submitted to Cherwell District Council. Planning applications 18/00484/OUT, and 14/01384/OUT for outline planning permission for 75 homes and the Bicester Eco Town development respectively. The Planning Archaeologist to Oxfordshire County Council, Mr Richard Oram, had requested an archaeological evaluation of the south-eastern portion of the Site following the submission of an archaeological desk-based assessment as part of the outline planning application in 2018. The remainder of the Site (north-western portion) underwent an archaeological evaluation as part of the planning application in 2014 and subsequent mitigation strategy has been agreed by the Planning Archaeologist, discussed below.

Statute, policy and guidance context

- 1.5. The Site is located in the local authority of Cherwell District Council. A new Local Development Plan, ‘Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031’ (Part 1), was adopted in July 2015. Relevant policy for the historic environment is Policy ESD15, and forms part of the Strategic Objectives for the district (SO15). The 2014 Submission Version of Part 2 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2006-2031 (2014) sets out the development delivery plan for the district.

1.6. Although not a full desk-based assessment (as defined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists), this report has been undertaken in accordance with the key statute, policy and guidance context presented within Table 1.1.

Statute	Description
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)	Act of Parliament providing for the maintenance of a schedule of archaeological remains of the highest significance, affording them statutory protection.
National Heritage Act 1983 (amended 2002)	One of four Acts of Parliament providing for the protection and management of the historic environment, including the establishment of the Historic Monuments & Buildings Commission, now Historic England.
Conservation Principles (Historic England 2008)	Guidance for assessing heritage significance, with reference to contributing heritage values, in particular: <i>evidential</i> (archaeological), <i>historical</i> (illustrative and associative), <i>aesthetic</i> , and <i>communal</i> .
National Planning Policy Framework (2019)	Provides the English government's national planning policies and describes how these are expected to be applied within the planning system. Heritage is subject of Chapter 16 (page 54).
National Planning Practice Guidance (updated July 2019)	Guidance supporting the National Planning Policy Framework.
Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 2 (GPA2): Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015)	Provides useful information on assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.
Historic England Advice Note 12 (HEAN12) Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (2019)	This advice note covers the National Planning Policy Framework requirement for applicants for heritage and other consents to describe heritage significance to help local planning authorities to make decisions on the impact of proposals for change to heritage assets. The advice note explores the assessment of significance and describes the relationship with between archaeological desk-based assessments and field evaluations, as well as Design and Access Statements.
Cherwell Local Plan (2011-31)	Comprises the local development plan (local plan), as required to be compiled, published and maintained by the local authority, consistent with the requirements of the NPPF (2019). Intended to be the primary planning policy document against which planning proposals within that local authority jurisdiction are assessed. Where the development plan is found to be inadequate, primacy reverts to the NPPF (2019).
Hedgerows Regulations (1997)	Provides protection for 'important' hedgerows within the countryside, controlling their alteration and removal by means of a system of statutory notification.

Table 1.1 Key statute, policy and guidance

2. LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

Landscape context

- 2.1. The Site, c.22.6ha in extent, is bounded to the south by the course of Town Brook (an inland river) and to the west by the B4100 road. At present, the Site is currently open agricultural land partitioned by hedgerow boundaries, c.1.5km to the north of the centre of Bicester. Residential development has commenced to the north-east of the Site, identified as Elmsbrook Phase 3 (Fig. 3). The Site forms the northern-eastern most extent of Bicester Eco Town, which extends to the south-west, to the south of the railway line (Fig. 1).
- 2.2. The Site lies within a landscape of dense later prehistoric and Roman activity and subsequent historic agricultural use (Oxford Archaeology 2014). Evidence of later prehistoric dispersed land use, indicative of peripheral settlement activity is present within the surrounds of the Site as well as ditches containing 1st to 3rd century pottery and the remains of enclosures indicative of Roman rural activity (Hyder Consulting 2014).



Fig. 2 Tithe Map of the Parish of Caversfield, 1851 (extract)

- 2.3. The Site lies to the west of the location of a deserted medieval settlement at Caversfield and it is likely that the Site formed part of the supporting agricultural hinterland of the nearby settlements during the medieval period (Hyder Consulting

2014). The Site certainly forms part of the historic open agricultural land within the parish of Caversfield until the enclosure of the area in the late 18th century. The 1851 Caversfield Tithe Apportionment later documents the land within the Site as owned by a *Robert Bullock Marsham Esquire, D.C.L.* and occupied by a *William Page* as a mix of pasture, arable and woodland (The Genealogist 2020; Fig. 2).

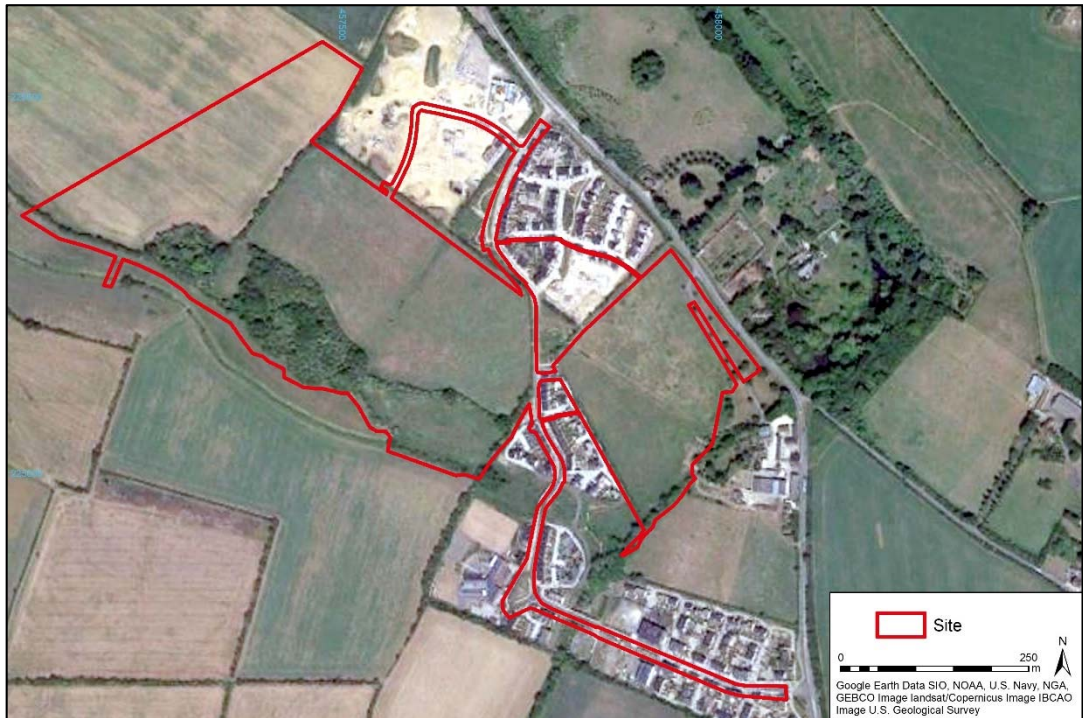
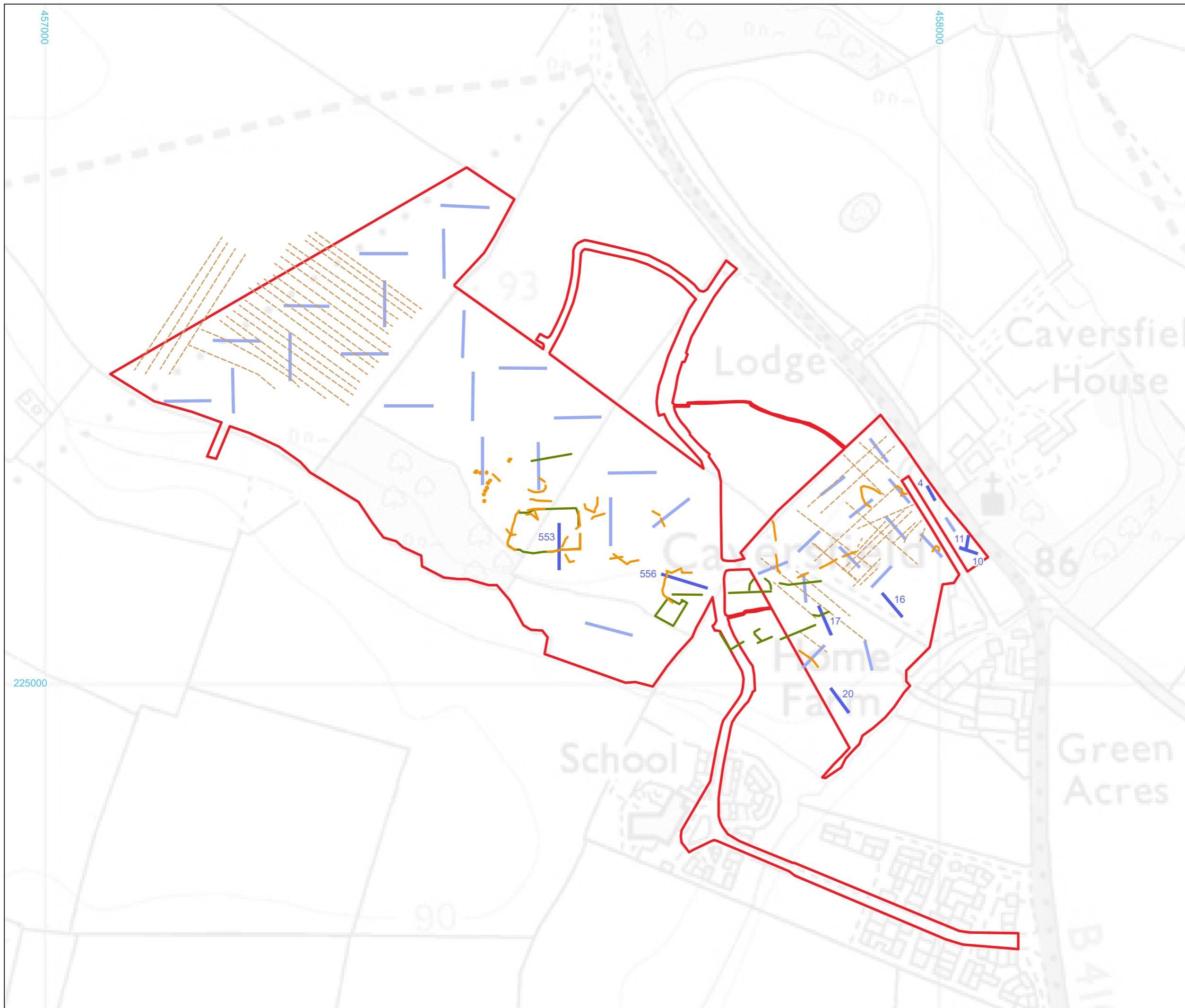
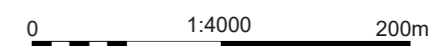


Fig. 3 Aerial imagery of the Site (05/2020)



- Site boundary
- Evaluation trench (*transcribed from Oxford Archaeology 2010; MOLA 2018*)
- Evaluation trench with archaeology
- Cropmark (*transcribed from Air Photo Services 2010*)
- Geophysics - possible archaeology (*transcribed from Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012; Magnitude Surveys 2018*)
- Agricultural - cropmark and geophysics (*transcribed from Air Photo Services 2010; Magnitude Surveys 2018*)



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PROJECT TITLE
 Land at North West Bicester, Bicester
 Oxfordshire

FIGURE TITLE
 Evaluation trench locations and
 archaeology within the Site

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3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE OF THE SITE

- 3.1. The Site has undergone several phases of non-intrusive and intrusive archaeological investigation works. Initial aerial photograph analysis, followed by geophysical survey and subsequent archaeological evaluation trenching was carried out within and surrounding the Site to the south-west during 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2018 (Air Photo Services 2010; Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012; Oxford Archaeology 2014; Magnitude Surveys 2018; MOLA 2018).

Archaeological evaluation results of the Site

- 3.2. Twenty-two archaeological evaluation trenches were investigated within the north-western portion of the Site as part of the Bicester Eco Town archaeological evaluation by Oxford Archaeology (2014). Twenty trenches were investigated within the south-eastern portion of the Site by MOLA (2018) as part of an outline planning application for residential development. In total, eight trenches contained pre-modern deposits, six of which were in the south-eastern portion of the Site (Fig. 4).
- 3.3. The results of the archaeological remains recorded during the evaluations within the Site are as follows.

North-western portion of the Site

Trench 553

- 3.4. A single ditch orientated east to west was excavated in this trench. The ditch was recorded as 1.3m in width and 0.66m in depth. The ditch contained three fills, the intermediary fill contained pottery sherds and animal bone identified as Middle Iron Age in date (Fig. 4).
- 3.5. The location and alignment of this ditch correlates with the cropmark remains and geophysical survey results. The cropmark measures c.47m in width and c.75m in length. Possible entrance ways are present along the eastern and western sides. It is likely that this feature is later prehistoric (Iron Age) in date and is contemporary with the archaeological remains identified within the wider surrounds of the Site (Hyder Consulting 2014; Oxford Archaeology 2014).

Trench 556

- 3.6. A single ditch orientated north-east to south-west was excavated in this trench (1.02m in width, 0.35m in depth). Although this ditch feature contained no dateable evidence, cropmark and geophysical investigation suggests that this ditch formed

part of a wider curvilinear feature (Fig. 4). Due to the proximity of the feature in relation to the enclosure cropmark recorded in Trench 553, it is possible that this curvilinear ditch is a contemporary landscape feature.

South-eastern portion of the Site

Trench 4, 10, 11

- 3.7. These trenches were situated within the easternmost part of the Site (Fig. 4). Ditches orientated north to south and north-east to south-west contained a modest quantity of pottery sherds dated to the Early/Middle Anglo-Saxon period (early medieval) to the 13th century. The remains of a medieval trackway or holloway orientated north-east to south-west contained 14th century pottery sherds (MOLA 2018). These remains are indicative of peripheral settlement activity and are possibly contemporary with the former medieval settlement to the east of the Church of St Laurence.

Trench 16

- 3.8. A ditch orientated north-east to south-west was recorded within the northern extent of Trench 16. The ditch (1.23m in width and 0.42m in depth) contained three fills, the intermediary fill contained a single pottery sherd identified as Late Anglo-Saxon (early medieval) and a modest assemblage of faunal remains of cow, sheep or goat and duck bones (MOLA 2018). Such remains are indicative of peripheral settlement activity (i.e. small amounts of discarded waste).

Trench 17, 20

- 3.9. Both trenches contained single ditches with no dateable evidence. The linear feature in Trench 17 corresponded with the cropmarks and geophysical survey results and was identified as a field boundary, possibly exaggerated by geological variation. The ditch in Trench 20 was identified as a possible drainage channel, exaggerated through the natural fluvial process (MOLA 2018).

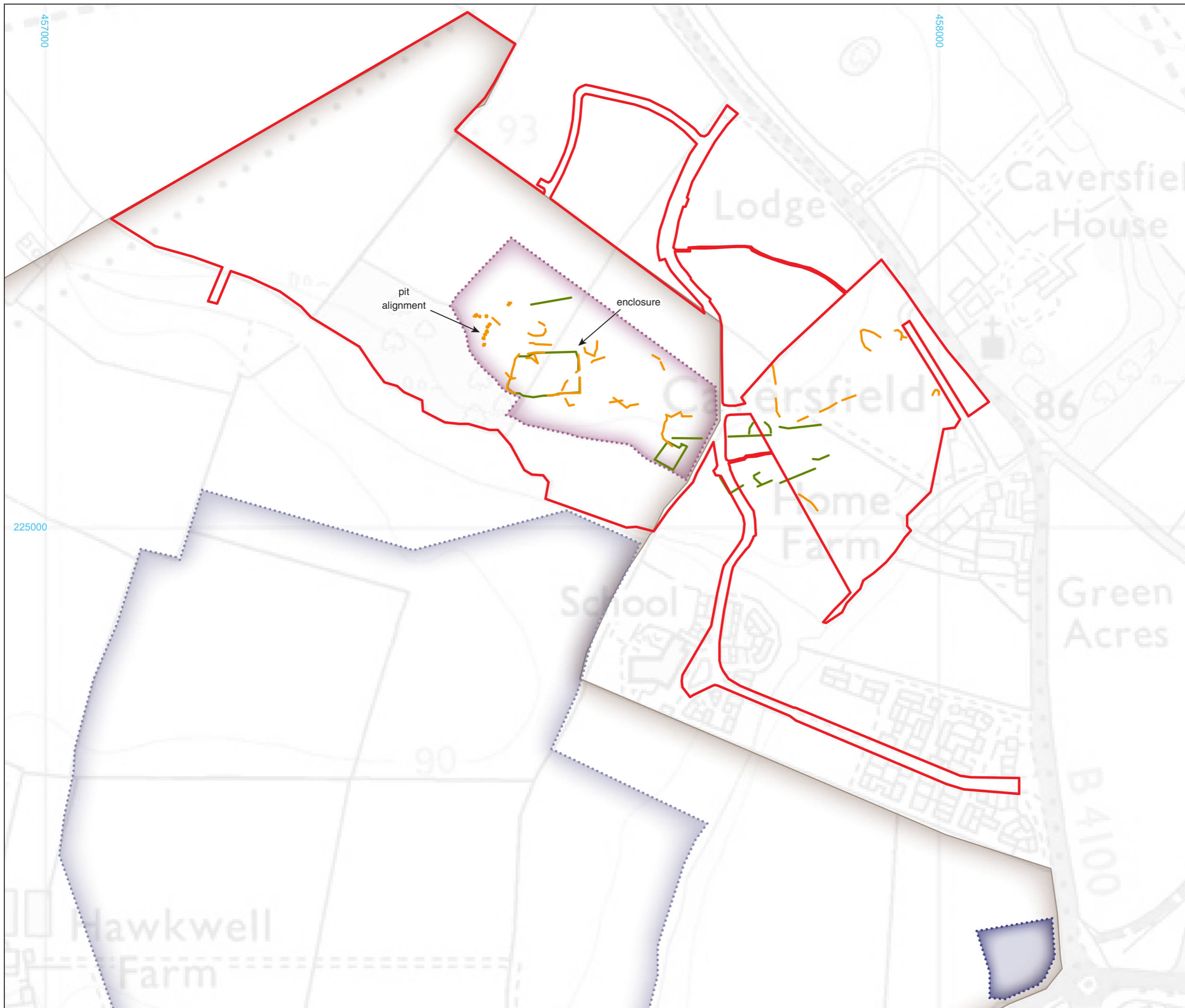
Summary

- 3.10. The evaluation trenches targeted areas of cropmark remains and potential archaeology identified from the geophysical survey and those areas without any identified potential archaeology. The archaeology within the Site comprises later prehistoric and early to late medieval land use. There is little evidence to confirm whether the Site formed part of a later prehistoric settlement focus, although the cropmarks and geophysical survey results are suggestive of more extensive

occupation than had been recorded during the evaluation within the north-western portion of the Site (Oxford Archaeology 2014).

Mitigation strategy as agreed by the Planning Archaeologist

- 3.11. An archaeological mitigation strategy was agreed (May 2017) by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council as part of the Bicester Eco Town development to the north of the railway (Fig. 5). Mitigation Area 2 encompasses the geophysical survey results of the north-western portion of the Site and covers the possible prehistoric enclosure identified from archaeological evaluation, aerial photograph analysis and geophysical survey. The geophysics survey identified an alignment of discrete gestures within the north-western position of the Site, possibly a prehistoric pit alignment, along with further linear and curvilinear features (Fig. 4). These features will be further investigated as part of the mitigation strategy.
- 3.12. Correspondence with Mr Richard Oram dated to 12/03/2020, confirmed that no further pre-determination archaeological investigations were required within the remainder of the Site.



- Site boundary
- Cropmark (*transcribed from Air Photo Services 2010*)
- Geophysics - possible archaeology (*transcribed from Northamptonshire Archaeology 2012; Magnitude Surveys 2018*)
- Bicester Eco Town Development

Mitigation Areas

- Area 1
- Area 2
- Area 3



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FIGURE TITLE
 Mitigation Areas confirmed by the
 Oxfordshire County Council Planning
 Archaeologist (May 2017)

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4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. The Site forms part of the allocated Bicester Eco Town development area. The assessment reported here was informed exclusively by reports of previous archaeological investigations of the Site, including the results of the archaeological evaluation carried out as part of the Bicester Eco Town development.
- 4.2. This Assessment has identified no overriding archaeological results that would preclude development. A mitigation plan has been agreed by Mr Richard Oram, the Planning Archaeologist to Oxfordshire County Council, for the north-western portion of the Site. The mitigation area focusses on the potential for later prehistoric remains identified by the archaeological evaluation, aerial photograph analyses and geophysical survey. The south-eastern portion of the Site, comprising the remains of early to late medieval activity, requires no further archaeological investigation prior to approval of the planning application as agreed by Mr Richard Oram.
- 4.3. This Assessment has been produced in accordance with the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Local Policy.

5. REFERENCES

- Air Photo Services 2010 *Bicester Eco Town, Oxfordshire: Part 1: The Entire Site: interpretation of Aerial Photographs for Archaeology*. Document reference: CC210-0802-1-1.
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2020 *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment*
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The Genealogist 2020 *Tithe & Landowner: Caversfield Tithe*. Available from: https://www.thegenealogist.co.uk/search/master/?type=person&source=&search_type=person&master_event=Tithe+%26+Landowner&person_event=&fn=&phonetic_mode_fn=1&sn=&phonetic_mode_sn=1&kw=Caversfield&yr=&range=10&search=Search#loadwindow_368363826 [Accessed 21/08/2020].

Cartographic sources

1815 William Stanley's Map of Bicester

1851 Titheable lands of the Parish of Caversfield in the County of Oxford

Subsequent Ordnance Survey maps viewed at: www.maps.nls.uk/geo/find/

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