Land off Woodway Road
Sibford Ferris
Oxfordshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Date: December 2021
By: Phil Weston
Client: Blue Cedar Homes
Project Code: RR0421
OASIS No.: redriver2-503468

Red River Archaeology

Land off Woodway Road

Sibford Ferris

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Archaeological Evaluation

Client	**Blue Cedar Homes**
Project Code	**RR0421**
Prepared By	**Phil Weston**
Illustrated By	**Phil Weston/Hannah Sims**

Rev Number	Description	Undertaken	Approved	Date
1.0	Draft for comment	PW	DG	21/12/2021
1.1	Address external comments	PW	DG	22/12/2021

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1. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Project Name:	Land off Woodway Road
Location:	Sibford Ferris
NGR:	SP 35383 37172
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	15th to 17th December 2021
Location of Archive:	Red River Archaeology Offices
Site Code:	RR0421

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the south and east of Woodway Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire. Six trenches, each 20m long, were excavated targeted on previously identified geophysical anomalies and 'blank' areas of site.

No archaeological features or deposits were found during the course of the evaluation. The geophysical anomalies, described as being of 'uncertain origin', were not apparent.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation, conducted between the 15th and 17th of December 2021, on land off Woodway Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire (hereafter the 'site' – centred on National Grid Reference SP 35383 37172). The work was undertaken by Red River Archaeology Ltd. for Bristol and Bath Heritage Consultancy (BBHC) on behalf of the client Blue Cedar Homes.

2.1.2 The site has been outlined for a proposed residential development and the archaeological evaluation formed part of the pre-application assessment of the site. The archaeological investigation of land immediately to the south of the site demonstrated the existence of archaeological remains which may extend into the present site. Therefore, in line with local policy, an archaeological evaluation for the present site was deemed essential to understand the likely presence/absence and significance of any archaeological remains within it. The evaluation of site was broken into two stages, Stage 1: Magnetometer survey, which has been completed by SUMO Survey (2021), and Stage 2: Archaeological evaluation by trial trenching, the results of which are presented in this report.

2.1.3 The scope of the archaeological evaluation works required was defined in *Land off Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxon: Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2021) issued by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) and *Archaeological Evaluation: Stage 2 Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation* by BBHC (2021). Red River Archaeology prepared a *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation (WSI)* outlining a programme of archaeological trial trenching of the site. It was submitted to the LPA Advisor for comment and approval.

2.1.4 The fieldwork followed the *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2020), 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).

2.2 Site Location and Description

2.2.1 The site (Figure 1) covers an area of approximately 7600m², and comprises a paddock located at the south-western edge of the village of Sibford Ferris. It is bounded to the north by the gardens of residential properties fronting on to Woodway Road, to the west by Woodway Road, to the south by the development site noted above (2.1.2) and to the east by residential properties fronting Woodway Road and Stewart's Court. The site is situated approximately

1km to the north of the river Stour. Ground levels within the site vary from 166m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the north-west to c. 173m aOD in the south-east.

2.2.2 The underlying bedrock geology across the entirety of the application site is mapped as Northampton Sand Formation, sandstone, limestone, and ironstone (BGS online viewer, accessed 20/12/2021). No superficial deposits are recorded.

2.3 Archaeological Background

2.3.1 The site lies at the south-western extent of the village of Sibford Ferris, which has its origins in the Saxon period (Orion Heritage, 2018). The development site immediately to the south of the present site, and which formed part of the same field until the mid 20th century, has been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment (Orion Heritage, 2018), assessment and interpretation of aerial imagery (Airphoto Services, 2018), Magnetometer survey (Magnitude Surveys, 2019) and archaeological evaluation by trial trenching (Cotswold Archaeology, 2019). Prior to these assessments and evaluations of the development site to the south, there had been little archaeological work within the area, other than an archaeological watching brief at the Manor House. Findspots, including a number of prehistoric arrowheads and scrapers, have been recorded across the wider landscape. However, the desk-based assessment and aerial photographic assessment, which included the present application site within their study areas, suggested there was no evidence for archaeological features within the site environs.

2.3.2 LiDAR data has been analysed using Hillshade analysis from three different azimuths (0, 75 and 315) and Sky-View Factor (ambient occlusion) analysis. Whilst slight banks around the perimeter of the paddock, and ridges within it, are visible these appear to relate to recent ploughing and cultivation patterns that can be seen on satellite imagery, and it is not possible to discern any clear potential archaeological earthwork features either within the site, nor the known enclosures and ditches seen in the field to the south. Any Prehistoric and Roman features within the site, therefore, appear likely to be obscured by later agricultural activity in these visualisations.

2.3.3 Despite the seemingly low archaeological potential identified in the desk-based assessments, the Magnitude magnetometer survey of the development site to the south strongly suggested potential rectilinear enclosure systems within the development site, thought to be indicative of prehistoric activity (Magnitude Surveys, 2019). This was largely borne out by the subsequent Cotswold Archaeology (2019) trial-trench evaluation. Broadly middle to late-Iron Age pottery was recovered from a ditched enclosure and large boundary ditch, along with further isolated pits and a ditch. This was concentrated in the eastern part of the development site, in an area to the south-east of the present site.

2.3.4 Limited evidence for Roman occupation was also present in the form of a second enclosure. Another large enclosure, along with pits and ditches, was identified in the east of the site, but was undated. The stratigraphic relationships between the enclosures could not be established during the evaluation, but it is suggested they were not all contemporary, and that the prehistoric settlement had grown organically over a period of time (Cotswold Archaeology, 2019). Ditch-like features detected by the magnetometer survey appear to extend northwards, below the housing development at Stewart's Court, to the immediate east of the present site, although none of the anomalies appear certain to continue into the present site itself, and it may be that activity is concentrated towards a precursor of Hook Norton Road a short distance to the east.

2.3.5 Despite the evidence for settlement in the Iron Age and Roman periods, it seems likely the site subsequently lay within the agricultural hinterland of the village throughout the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. It remains today as undeveloped agricultural land, although the village expanded into the areas to the immediate north and east of the site in the second half of the 20th century. The boundary between the present site and the development site to the south appears to have been formed in the middle of the 20th century, prior to which the two formed part of a larger field.

2.3.6 Following on from the results of the 2019 Cotswold Archaeology evaluation and preceding geophysical survey, a Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Mitigation at the development site to the south of the current site was prepared in May 2021 (Orion Heritage, 2021). This required archaeological excavation of an area of enclosure features identified in the east of that site. The mitigation excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology South and completed shortly before the evaluation of the current site began. The mitigation excavation revealed evidence of Iron Age settlement activity with potentially an earlier Bronze Age phase identified (Victoria Green, OCAS *pers. comm.*).

3. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

3.1.1 In accordance with *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA, 2020a), the evaluation has been designed to be minimally intrusive and minimally destructive to archaeological remains. The information gathered will enable the local planning authority to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset, consider the impact of the proposed development upon it, and to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the development proposal, in line with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021). The aims of the evaluation proposed in this WSI 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
- Determine the heritage significance of any archaeological remains encountered
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions
- 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 Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (https://library.thehumanjourney.net/2597/)

3.1.2 These aims will be achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

- To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible

- 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

3.1.3 While there is no specific archaeological information about the site itself, it has the potential to seek address research aims defined within the Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas (https://library. thehumanjourney.net/2597/). Relevant related topics from the Research Agenda include:

- Sites with well-preserved deposits of both late Iron Age and Roman date should be given careful attention in order to investigate continuity of local tradition at these sites
- The evidence for major change in settlement occupation across the diverse landscapes of the region between the late Iron Age and the early medieval period needs to be collated
- The identification of the extent to which there was continuity of use between Romano-British sites and Anglo-Saxon
- Identifying and exploring the extent to which Romano-British agricultural practices persisted into the Anglo-Saxon period
- Arriving at a better understanding of the relationship – economic, political, social – between incoming Anglo-Saxons and surviving Romano-British communities across the region

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken by Red River Archaeology Ltd. between the 15th and 17th of December 2021. Six trenches, each 20m long by 1.8m wide, were excavated within the proposed footprint of the development as indicated by the WSI (Red River 2021, Figure 1; Figure 1).

3.2.2 The trenches were surveyed on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using GPS equipment. All information identified in the course of the site works was recorded stratigraphically, with sufficient graphic record (plans, sections and photographs) to identify and illustrate individual deposits.

3.2.3 All trenches were excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed grading bucket and excavated under constant archaeological supervision. Non-significant overburden was removed in shallow spits until the undisturbed geological substrate were exposed. Thereafter, any identified deposits were cleaned and investigated by hand to define their extent, nature and form. All spoil heaps were examined for finds.

3.2.4 The trenches were recorded using Red River's *pro forma* archaeological record sheets. Site photography was by high resolution (14 megapixel or greater) colour DSLR cameras, each image recorded on a photographic register detailing as a minimum the subject, deposit number, location and direction of each shot. Sample trench sections were drawn at an appropriate scale (typically 1:10) on permatrace, each drawing being related to Ordnance Datum.

3.2.5 All identified deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods from sampling and recording to post-excavation. 2nd Edition* (English Heritage 2011). No deposits were identified during the evaluation that required sampling.

3.2.6 The artefact collection policy was concerned with the provision of adequate samples for meeting the objectives of the work, although no finds were recovered. Red River Archaeology Ltd. treats all retained finds in accordance with the English Heritage guidance document: *A Strategy for the Care and Investigation of Finds* (English Heritage, 1995), the UKIC's document *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC, 1990) and Oxford Museums Service's *Requirements for Transferring Archaeological Archives 2020 – 2021* (OMS, 2020).

3.2.7 In accordance with the brief issued by OCAS, the WSI prepared by Red River Archaeology and industry standards, the fieldwork was monitored by Victoria Green of OCAS. The monitoring comprised a site visit on 16th December 2021 attended by OCAS and Simon Cox of BBHC during which the trenches were inspected and approved for backfilling by OCAS.

3.2.8 The archive from the evaluation is currently held by Red River Archaeology Ltd. at their offices in Cardiff and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service and ADS. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix 2, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

4. RESULTS

4.1.1 The deposit model was uniform across site comprising a 0.1m to 0.25m deep greyish orange, soft sandy silt topsoil overlying a 0.1m to 0.35m deep dark brownish grey, compact sandy silt subsoil. The natural geology was variously a bright reddish orange mixed clay and sand and outcrops of degraded sandstone bedrock (Plates 1 to 4). A full description of the encountered stratigraphy in each trench is provided in Appendix 1.

4.1.2 No archaeological features or horizons were found during the course of the evaluation and no finds were recovered, or samples taken.

4.1.3 The geophysical anomalies investigated by trenches 1 to 4 were not apparent when the trenches were excavated, nor was any trace seen once the trenches had been left open overnight. The weak anomalies were assigned the category of 'uncertain' in the geophysical report (SUMO, 2021) and it is likely they were related to natural variation in the soils or perhaps agricultural practices.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1.1 The archaeological evaluation proved to be entirely negative indicating the site fell outside the limits of possible Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British activity identified in the field to the south. Furthermore, the evaluation results appear to confirm the site lay within the agricultural hinterland of the village of Sibford Ferris throughout the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods, as suggested in the archaeological background section above.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Potential Archaeological Resource and Significance

6.1.1 The archaeological evaluation found no features or finds of archaeological significance.

6.2 Impact of the Development

6.2.1 Based on the findings of the archaeological evaluation, there is considered to be a very low potential for archaeological remains to be present on site. The impact of the development on the archaeological resource, is, therefore, considered to be negligible.

7. REFERENCES

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SUMO, 2021, *Land off Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxon: Geophysical Survey Report*, Unpubl. Rep. SUMO-05301

Online Sources

British Geological Survey online viewer http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html (accessed 20/12/2021)

Solent-Thames Research Framework for the Historic Environment Resource Assessments and Research Agendas Research agendas (oxfordarchaeology.com) (accessed 20/12/2021)

ARCHIVE STATEMENT

The site archive is comprised of the following materials:

Item	Quantity
Trenching and field recording sheets	6 Trench Record Sheets (A4)
GPS Plans	Digital data
Digital Photographs	25 images
Registers (Context, finds, drawing, photo)	1 Photo Register (A4)

The archive material is contained within one box.

The archive is currently stored by Red River Archaeology Ltd. at their Cardiff Office, Unit K7 Capital Business Park, The Levels, Cardiff, CF3 2PU, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Services.

APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT REGISTER

Trench	Context no.	Type	Depth (m.)	Description	Notes
1	101	Deposit	0.15	Greyish orange, soft sandy silt	Topsoil (0.00 – 0.15m)
	102	Deposit	0.25	Dark brownish grey, compact sandy silt	Subsoil (0.15 – 0.4m)
	103	Deposit	-	Bright reddish orange mixed clay and sand	Natural (0.4m+)
2	201	Deposit	0.2	Greyish orange, soft sandy silt	Topsoil (0.00 – 0.2m)
	202	Deposit	0.3	Dark brownish grey, compact sandy silt	Subsoil (0.2 – 0.5m)
	203	Deposit	-	Mottled yellow clay with sandstone bedrock in places	Natural (0.5m+)
3	301	Deposit	0.2	Greyish orange, soft sandy silt	Topsoil (0.00 – 0.2m)
	302	Deposit	0.25	Dark brownish grey, compact sandy silt	Subsoil (0.2 – 0.45m)
	303	Deposit	-	Bright reddish orange mixed clay and sand with degraded sandstone	Natural (0.45m+)
4	401	Deposit	0.2	Greyish orange, soft sandy silt	Topsoil (0.00 – 0.2m)
	402	Deposit	0.35	Dark brownish grey, compact sandy silt	Subsoil (0.2 – 0.55m)
	403	Deposit	-	Orange/red degraded sandstone	Natural (0.55m+)
5	501	Deposit	0.1	Greyish orange, soft sandy silt	Topsoil (0.00 – 0.1m)
	502	Deposit	0.15	Dark brownish grey, compact sandy silt	Subsoil (0.1 – 0.25m)
	503	Deposit	-	Light reddish yellow, sandstone and sand	Natural (0.25m+)
6	601	Deposit	0.25	Greyish orange, soft sandy silt	Topsoil (0.00 – 0.25m)
	602	Deposit	0.35	Dark brownish grey, compact sandy silt	Subsoil (0.25 – 0.6m)
	603	Deposit	-	Sandstone bedrock	Natural (0.6m+)

APPENDIX 2 OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
OASIS Number	redriver2-503468	
Project Name	Land off Woodway Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire	
Short description	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land off Woodway Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire in an area of rough pasture. Six trenches, each 20m long, were excavated targeted on previously identified geophysical anomalies and blank areas of site. No archaeological features or deposits were found during the course of the evaluation.	
Project dates	15th to 17th December 2021	
Project type	Field Evaluation	
Previous work	Geophysical survey	
Future work	Unknown	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	The site comprised a paddock located at the south-western edge of the village of Sibford Ferris. It was bounded to the north by the gardens of residential properties fronting on to Woodway Road, to the west by Woodway Road, to the south by a development site and to the east by residential properties fronting Woodway Road and Stewart's Court. The site is situated approximately 1km to the north of the river Stour.	
Study area	7600m²	
Site co-ordinates	SP 35383 37172	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Red River Archaeology Ltd.	
Project Brief originator	Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services	
Project Design (WSI) Originator	Red River Archaeology	
Project Manager	Phil Weston	
Project Officer	Francesca Giarelli	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive (Museum/ Accession no.) TBC	Content
Physical	n/a	n/a
Paper	Oxfordshire Museum Services	Register, trench recording sheets
Digital	Oxfordshire Museum Services	Digital photographs; site plan
BIBLIOGRAPHY Red River Archaeology, 2021, *Land off Woodway Road, Sibford Ferris, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Evaluation*		

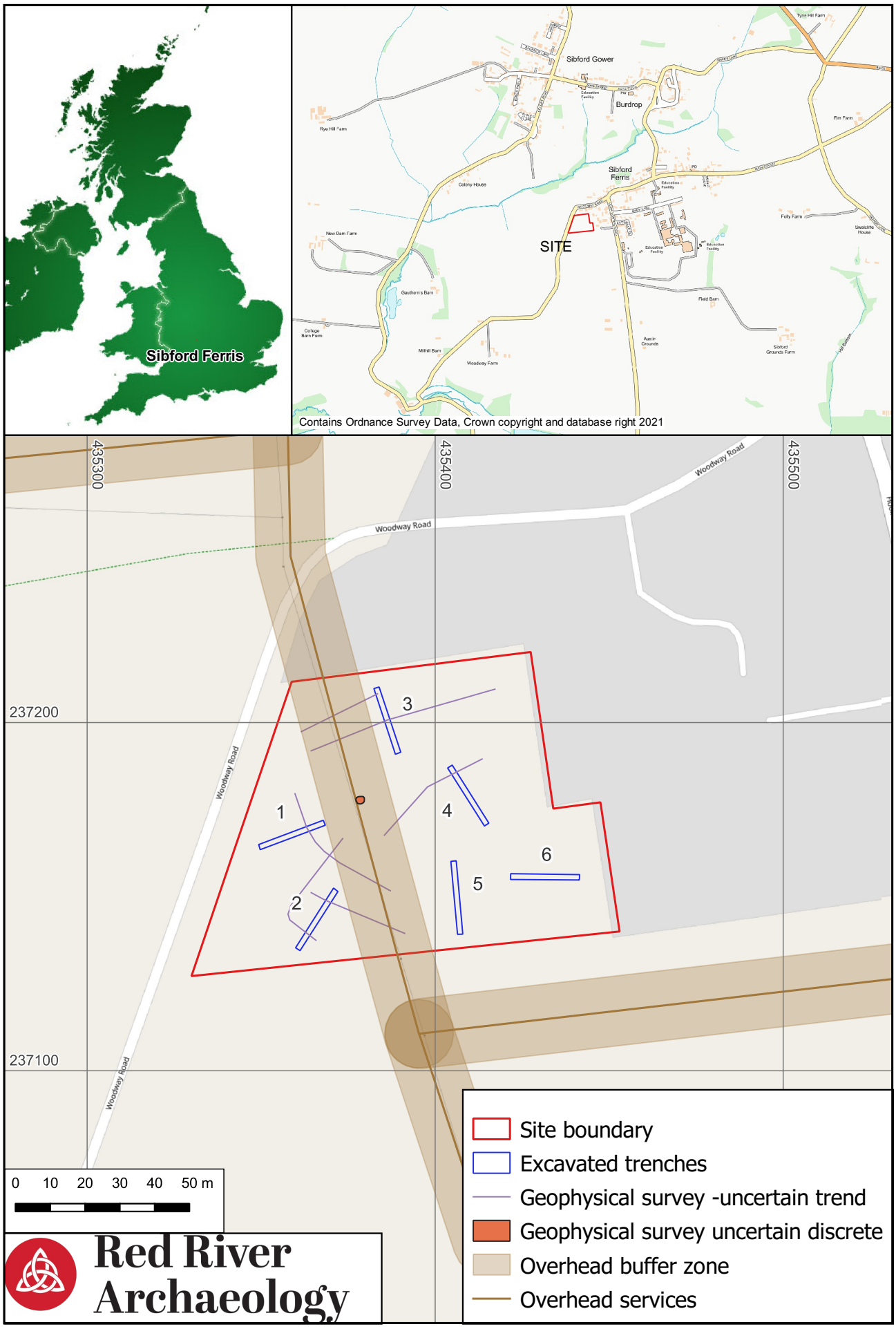
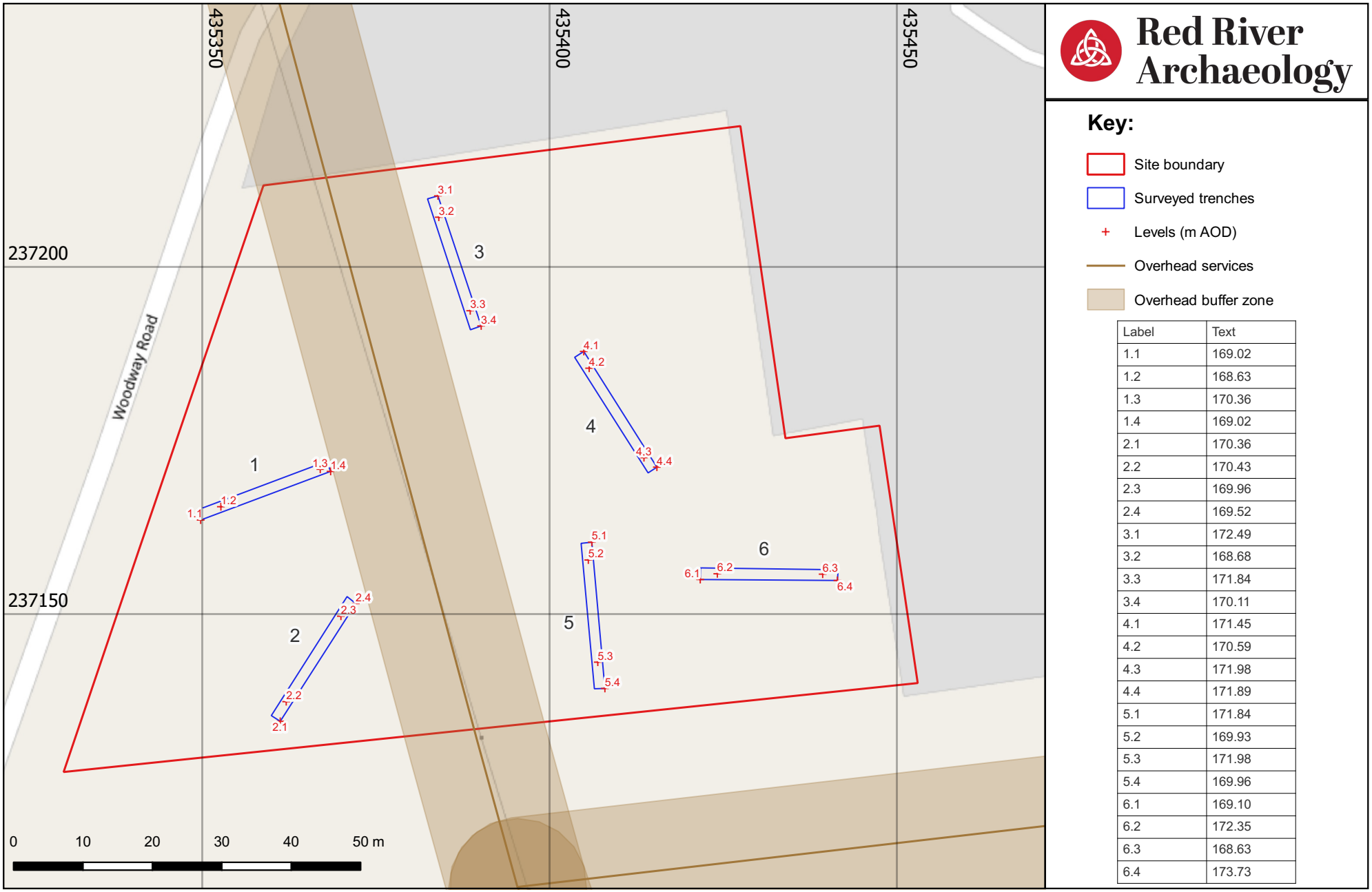


Figure 1 - Site location and excavated trenches overlying geophysical interpretation data



Label	Text
1.1	169.02
1.2	168.63
1.3	170.36
1.4	169.02
2.1	170.36
2.2	170.43
2.3	169.96
2.4	169.52
3.1	172.49
3.2	168.68
3.3	171.84
3.4	170.11
4.1	171.45
4.2	170.59
4.3	171.98
4.4	171.89
5.1	171.84
5.2	169.93
5.3	171.98
5.4	169.96
6.1	169.10
6.2	172.35
6.3	168.63
6.4	173.73

Figure 2 - Surveyed trenches showing levels data

Plate 1 - Trench 4, looking north-west

Plate 2 - Trench 3, looking west

Plate 3 - Trench 2 representative section, looking north-west

Plate 4 - Trench 3 representative section, looking north