Land off Back Lane, Ramsbury, Wiltshire

Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation

Bristol: April 2023

Avon Archaeology Limited

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Document Title	Land off Back Lane, Ramsbury, Wiltshire
Document Subtitle	Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation
Client Name	Alison and Ian Mills
Site Location	Back Lane, Ramsbury, Wiltshire SN8 2QH
County	Wiltshire
National Grid Reference	SU 27312 71658
Planning Authority	Wiltshire Council
Planning Reference	PL/2022/00916
Museum Name	Wiltshire Museum, Devizes
Museum Accession	DZSWS:17-2021
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1 Introduction

1.1 A Programme of Archaeological Evaluation has been requested on land on the south side of Back Lane, Ramsbury, Wiltshire, to provide additional information regarding archaeology prior to a planning application for the erection of one new dwelling at the above site.

1.2 The proposed development will partially cover the central and eastern portion of the site and new vehicular access will be created in the northeast corner, leading off Back Lane. The development itself will entail the construction of a single, semi-underground dwelling, with a grass roof.

1.3 The site has high archaeological potential as it lies within the bounds of the Saxon settlement of Ramsbury (WHER MWI19797) and perhaps more significantly is cited as the possible location of a bishop's residence and grounds. Cartographic illustration of the past few hundred years indicate minimal ground disturbance of the site, which would suggest that any archaeological features may be well preserved (Driscoll 2020).

1.4 A programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching (Archaeological Evaluation), has been agreed in order to establish the presence or absence of significant buried archaeological deposits on the site and, if present, their date, quality, and importance. The results of the fieldwork will be used to characterise and define the nature of the heritage assets within the development area and the potential impact that the development will have on those heritage assets.

1.5 This Written Scheme of Investigation has been produced to set out a methodology for the Archaeological Evaluation element of the project, which must be agreed by the planning department prior to trial trenches being excavated.

1.6 The work will be conducted in accordance with the relevant guidelines for intrusive evaluation as issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists – specifically, *the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field*

Evaluation, last substantively revised in June 2020; and the guidelines for archaeological projects set out in MoRPHE (2015).

1.7 Health and Safety will take priority over all archaeological matters, and fieldwork will be undertaken in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy of Avon Archaeology Limited, produced in collaboration with AAL's health and safety advisors Acorn Health and Safety Ltd (AAL 2019), and in accordance with the guidelines set out by FAME (The Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers). A project specific Health & Safety risk assessment will be produced by Avon Archaeology Limited prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

1.8 Wiltshire Council will be notified of the project commencement date before work begins on site. Avon Archaeology Ltd will ensure that excavated trenches are, if required, available for inspection by the council's Archaeological Officer prior to backfilling.

2 National Planning Policy Framework and Local Planning Policy

2.1 Between March 2010 and March 2012, national planning guidelines as they related specifically to the historic environment were outlined in the document known as PPS5 (Planning and Policy Statement), Planning for the Historic Environment. However, in March 2012, PPS5, and indeed all the other planning policy guidance and statements which underpinned the operation of the national planning process, was replaced by a single, greatly simplified, overarching and integrated document known as the National Planning Policy Framework (Dept for Communities and Local Government, last reissued and revised July 2021).

2.2 Within this document, matters relating to archaeology and the historic environment generally are dealt with in Section 16, *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*, pages 55-58. Section 16 of the NPPF is a development and reframing of its predecessor, PPS5, although it is at least, in principle, underpinned by many of the same basic tenets. By far the majority of the document consists of guidance to local authorities on

how they should handle matters relating to the historic environment in their own areas, and the essence of the narrative is that, in most cases, decisions relating to the historic environment are devolved down to local authorities in the form of their own Local Plans, Core Strategies, Development Frameworks, Supplementary Planning Documents, etc.

2.3 Specifically for Wiltshire, the guiding principles in this respect are laid out in the *Wiltshire Core Strategy*, which was formally adopted in 2015.

Core Policy 58, *Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment*, states that:

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance, including:

i. Nationally significant archaeological remains;
ii. World Heritage Sites within and adjacent to Wiltshire;
iii. Buildings and structures of special architectural or historic interest;
iv. The special character or appearance of conservation areas; v. historic parks and gardens;
v. Important landscapes, including registered battlefields and townscapes.

Distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced. The potential contribution of these heritage assets towards wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits will also be utilised where this can be delivered in a sensitive and appropriate manner in accordance with Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping). Heritage assets at risk will be monitored and development proposals that improve their condition will be encouraged. The advice of statutory and local consultees will be sought in consideration of such applications.

3 Site Location, Geology and Topography

3.1 The village of Ramsbury lies 9 km northeast of Marlborough, close to the eastern border of Wiltshire on the north bank of the Kennet River Valley.

3.2 The project site is located on the south side of Back Lane. It is centred on NGR SU 27312 71658 and comprises a total area of approximately 0.25 hectares. The plot is broadly rectangular, its boundary defined by a high brick and flint wall on the north, east and west sides, with three narrow pedestrian wooden gates leading from Back Lane, to the plot.

3.3 Currently the site is largely undeveloped, occupied only by a small, single storey, open ended utility building centrally located, surrounded grass and shrub land.

3.4 Beyond the boundary wall and to the east of the site, are buildings related to Holy Cross Church (the old Vicarage, Vicarage Cottage, Church Hall), which itself lies just beyond the south east corner of the plot. Extending from the Church and forming the southern boundary is the cemetery and a small row of terraced housing. Burdett Street forms the western boundary.

3.5 Topographically the site is fairly flat. Geophysical survey carried out in 2002 concluded that the site had been levelled to create a platform within the walled garden. Land within the Project Site was recorded to be 1 m higher than that of the adjacent churchyard to the south (Payne) and it was concluded that the original landscape would have sloped gently south, from the road (Payne 2003).

3.6 Geologically the site is defined by Seaford Chalk Formation, formed approximately 84 to 90 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. To the south of the site, the chalk is overlain by an alluvial deposit of clay, silt, sand and gravel, formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (BGS 2020).

4 Archaeological and Historical Background

4.1 A full and detailed archaeological background is presented within the recent Desk-based assessment prepared by Sam Driscoll of HPS (2020). This document should be referred to for a concise background to the site.

4.2 The most salient fact is that the proposed development site is located within the bounds of the Saxon settlement of Ramsbury (WHER MWI19797) and

has been cited as the possible location of a major residence and associated grounds, of the Bishop of Ramsbury (WHER DWI17549).

4.3 The religious centre at Ramsbury was created as a formal see in AD 909 by the West Saxons. The present Church of Holy Cross is thought to be the location of the Saxon Cathedral. This theory is supported by the discovery, during restoration of the building in the 1890s, of carved building stone of 9th/10th century date. The episcopal residence would have been located within the settlement, adjacent to the cathedral. The Bishop's residence remained in Ramsbury until the early to mid-12th century, when it was moved to the well documented site at Ramsbury Manor Park, approximately 1.5km south-west of the village.

4.4 At the time of the Domesday survey 1086, Ramsbury was a settlement of some size with 156 households and 90 hides recorded.

5 Aims and Objectives

5.1 The purpose of an Archaeological Evaluation, as defined in the CIfA Standard and Guidance already cited, is to gather information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:

- The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource;
- The formulation of a strategy to mitigate a threat to the archaeological resource;
- The formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.

5.2 The objectives of this Archaeological Evaluation are:

• To determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the proposed development site;

• To establish and record the extent, character, date, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological remains, to an appropriate level and within the constraints of the proposed development site;

• To place identified archaeological remains within the wider historical and archaeological context in order to establish their significance; and

• To prepare an archaeological report detailing the results of the Evaluation.

6. Methodology

6.1 Avon Archaeology Limited will inform the Archaeological Officer for Wiltshire of the start date of the field evaluation. Access will be arranged for site visits in order to inspect progress on site if necessary.

Trenching

The proposed development will be confined to the eastern side of the site, within an area of approximately 0.11 hectares (1100m²). A 5% sample of the site is the recommended standard and equates to 25m² of test pitting/trenching.

6.2 It is therefore proposed to excavate 5 x 5m trial trenches each of standard 2m width, dispersed across the area of the proposed development, as shown on Figure 2.

6.3 Prior to any excavation being carried out, the ground will be surveyed using suitable cable avoidance equipment. All members of staff at AAL are certified to use these tools.

6.4 The trenches will be opened by machine using a toothless bucket. Where adverse ground conditions may make this difficult or impossible, work will stop, and explicit permission for use of a toothed bucket will be sought from Wiltshire Council Archaeological Service. Ideally the machine will excavate to the depth of either the first archaeological feature or significant deposit or buried natural substrate if no archaeological remains are present, and

thereafter by hand. This will be carried out under the supervision of supervision of a team of experienced archaeologists employed by Avon Archaeology Ltd.

6.5 Due to possible make-up deposits on the site, a small machine may not have the reach fully to excavate the full depth of the trenches. Hand excavation will replace the machine in these circumstances

6.6 The trenches will be opened as a straight-sided cutting onto the surface of the archaeology or the buried natural substrate (subject to safe working conditions). Excavations into unstable ground will be battered, stepped at 1m intervals or properly shored. Discrete cut features and post-holes etc, will be subject to 50% excavation by half sectioning. Linears will be excavated to the extent of 10% of their total length as found, and/or sectioned as required by the nature of the feature, to answer stratigraphic questions.

6.7 There is a possibility that the client may require the groundplan of the new dwelling to be shifted to the west of its current intended position, which would take it partially into the Meadow and Garden Area shown on Figure 2. In this case provision has been made for additional trenching in this area, not requiring a completely new WSI, but with trench positions to be agreed with the local authority Archaeologist.

Recording

6.8 All archaeological deposits and features will be recorded using the Avon Archaeology Limited pro forma recording system. A complete drawn record of excavated archaeological features and deposits will be made, including plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (usually 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections), and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid. The Ordnance Datum heights of all features will be calculated, and the levels added to the drawings.

6.9 A full photographic record will be made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels.

Survey

6.10 A survey of all archaeological features will be carried out using a GPS. All survey data will be recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and heights above Ordnance Datum. In the event that it is not possible to use the survey equipment, archaeological features will be located using client plans or features that appear on OS mapping. This will be achieved using handheld measuring tapes and the basic principles of triangulation.

Contingency Measures

6.11 In the event that significant archaeological deposits are discovered, contact with the client and the local authority's Archaeological Officer will be made to review any additional project requirements that are not outlined in this document.

6.12 A contingency fund has been earmarked for possible use to undertake additional work, including specialist studies and/or treatment of archaeological finds recovered during the course of post excavation assessment and project reporting.

Finds

6.13 All artefacts and ecofacts will be recovered, identified by stratigraphic unit, catalogued and prepared for long term storage after analysis, if appropriate. Provision is made in the form of a contingency to undertake appropriate analysis and reporting of significant artefacts if such finds are located during the site work.

6.14 Artefacts from features of modern date (19th-century or later) may be recorded on site but not retained.

6.15 Where appropriate, soil samples may be taken and sieved to aid finds recovery. Any finds requiring conservation or specific storage conditions will be dealt with immediately in line with *First Aid for Finds* (Watkinson and Neal 1998).

6.16 The collecting museum (Wiltshire Musuem, Devizes) will be consulted should material of significant importance is discovered during the project.

Environmental Sampling

6.17 All sampling will be undertaken by Avon Archaeology Limited and in line with the principles outlined in Historic England's guidance (English Heritage 2011 and Historic England 2015).

6.18 Bulk environmental soil samples taken for the recovery of plant macrofossils, wood charcoal, small animal bones and other small artefacts, will be taken as appropriate from well-sealed and dateable contexts or features. In general, features directly associated with particular activities (e.g. pits, latrines, cesspits, hearths, ovens, kilns, and corn driers) will be prioritised for sampling over features such as ditches or postholes, which are likely to contain reworked and residual material.

6.19 If waterlogged or mineralised deposits are encountered, an environmental sampling strategy will be devised and agreed with the local authority Archaeologist, as appropriate. Specialist guidance will be provided by Hayley McParland, Historic England's Science Advisor for the South West, with site visits undertaken if required.

6.20 Samples will be of an appropriate size – typically 40 litres for the recovery of environmental evidence from dry contexts and 10 litres from waterlogged deposits. Following specialist advice, other sampling methods such as monolith, Kubiena or contiguous small bulk (column) samples may be employed to enable investigation of deposits with regard to microfossils (e.g. pollen, diatoms) and macrofossils (e.g. molluscs, insects).

Human Remains

6.21 Any human remains discovered (articulated or disarticulated, cremated or unburnt) will in the first instance be left in situ, covered and protected. The need for excavation, removal and/or sampling will be determined following discussion with the client and the local authority's Archaeological Officer. If deemed appropriate, the remains will be fully recorded, excavated and

removed from the site in compliance with the terms of a Ministry of Justice licence, which will be obtained by Avon Archaeology Limited.

6.22 Any excavation and post-excavation processing of human remains will be undertaken in line with current guidance documents (Mitchell and Brickley 2017). Please note that appropriate specialist guidance may be provided by Heidi Dawson Hobbis (Winchester University), with site visits undertaken if required. The final deposition of human remains, following analysis, will be in accordance with the terms of the Ministry of Justice licence.

Treasure

6.23 Avon Archaeology Limited will immediately notify the client, the Archaeological Officer for Wiltshire Council and the collecting museum (Wiltshire Museum, Devizes) of the discovery of any material covered, or potentially covered, by the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by The Coroners and Justice Act 2009). All information required by the Treasure Act (i.e., finder, location, material, date, associated items etc.) will be reported to the Coroner within 14 days.

7 Personnel

7.1 The project will be managed by Rachel Heaton BSc. The site team are yet to be confirmed and will remain flexible due to the ongoing pandemic. The following key specialist studies will be earmarked to the project for post excavation specialist reporting where necessary.

- Roman pottery and finds – Dr Jane Timby
- Medieval and post-medieval ceramics – Dr A Guttierrez.
- Faunal remains – Joss Davis, MA, Avon Archaeology Limited
- Environmental Archaeology – Dr Mike Allen, Allen Environmental Archaeology
- Small Finds – In house and/or Dr Jane Timby
- Archaeometallurgy – Tim Young, GeoArch
- AMS dating – Dr Tim Knowles, University of Bristol AMS Lab
- Prehistoric Lithics – Dr Kath Walker, FSA, University of Bournemouth

8 Post-Excavation Reporting

8.1 Following the completion of the fieldwork and assessment of data recovered, a full report on the work will be produced in draft form, and forwarded to the client and the local authority Archaeological Officer for review. The final report will be issued upon settlement of all outstanding invoices.

8.2. The report will contain the following as a minimum:

- A frontispiece detailing the site name, grid reference, report author(s), project dates, project title and reference number and planning application number;
- A non-technical summary;
- The dates of the Evaluation;
- The aims and methodology of the Evaluation;
- The results of the Evaluation, including Post Excavation assessment;
- An interpretation of the Evaluation's results and an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on any archaeological remains encountered, with reference to the conclusions of the Heritage Impact Assessment;
- Selected images of the Evaluation from their photographic records;
- Supporting scaled plans and illustrations;
- Archive preparation and deposition arrangements;
- References

8.3 The final copy of the report will be submitted to the Historic Environment Record and deposited with the Archaeological Data Service, along with surveyed data in shapefile format. Digital geospatial data will be submitted to Wiltshire Council along with the project report. It is anticipated that this will be in a CAD format and will include all survey data.

Publication

8.4 If appropriate, a publication of findings will be made in a suitable medium at an appropriate detail, depending on the results of the project. As a minimum, a note will be submitted to a relevant local journal, which in this case will be the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*.

9 Preparation and Deposition of the Archive

9.1 On completion of the programme of work, every effort will be made to persuade the legal owner of any finds recovered (usually the landowner and/or developer) to transfer their ownership to the receiving museum, in line with a written agreement. This excludes human remains and any objects covered by the Treasure Act 1996 (as amended by the Coroners and Justice Act 2009).

9.2 The complete project archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, and digital data, will be prepared, compiled and presented in accordance with current national guidelines, and the formal Standards and Guidance document produced by the Wiltshire Museum in Devizes (Wiltshire 2019; Brown 2011; ADS 2013; CIfA 2020a).

9.3 Arrangements will be made with the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes, for the deposition of the documentary and material archive for storage and public access at an appropriate local museum. The archive will be deposited under the accession number DZSWS:17-2021. The archive will usually be deposited within one year of the completion of the project. Any and all deposition, or 'box' fees, required by the Wiltshire Museum in order correctly to accession the archive into its collections, will be covered in full by the client, via AAL.

9.4 An OASIS record for the project, 417048, has been created with key fields completed. The record will be completed at the end of the project. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service ArchSearch catalogue.

Avon Archaeology Ltd will ensure the deposition of the digital archive with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) within a reasonable period of time.

9.5 Until final deposition, the archive will be stored securely at the offices of the Avon Archaeology Limited.

10 Health and Safety

10.1 Health and Safety will take priority over all archaeological matters and fieldwork will be undertaken in accordance with the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers' guidelines. Project specific Health and Safety Risk Assessment and Safe Working documents will be prepared in advance of attendance on site in accordance with Avon Archaeology Ltd Health and Safety Policy, which has been drafted in collaboration with Acorn Health and Safety Ltd. All members of staff are qualified and registered with the Construction Skills Certification Scheme.

11 GDPR Compliance

11.1 We may process the information that we collect from clients and third parties such as landowners, for the legitimate purposes of our business:

- Artefacts provenance (that is, to record the history of an object); and
- To keep a record of our professional services on projects.

11.2 This information may be collected from contract documents, including tender information; and during a project, from information requested by telephone, email or in person, in relation to artefacts. The information includes an individual's or company's name, address, email address and telephone number.

11.3 We do not sell any data that we process. Nor do we use it for marketing or for any purpose other than those stated above. To fulfil our professional obligations, we store data in our project archives. In the case of any

artefacts collected, the local collecting museum is permitted to both store the artefacts and store, process and use the names and addresses of clients and landowners referenced in the archive. Data not passed to a museum is stored in our project archives which will be maintained for as long as Avon Archaeology Limited is in operation. Museums may hold data in connection with collections in perpetuity (i.e. forever). Such processing by a museum is strictly for the purpose of collections provenance. The personal data may be used by the museum to contact the client or third party regarding the archive.

11.4 When you enter into a contract with us, or when data is requested, you will be asked to confirm that you agree to the processing of your personal information. You may withdraw your consent at any time by contacting us using the details at the end of this policy. Where you wish to withdraw your consent for us to share your details with a third party museum please make this known to us and we will contact that third party on your behalf.

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Figure 1

Site Location Map
Grid Lines at 1000m Intervals

The Site

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Figure 2

Site Boundary Showing Red Line Boundaries and Proposed Trench Locations

