

Forest Gate Solar Farm, Chippenham, Wiltshire

NGR: ST 94572 71552

Archaeological Management Plan



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For: **Eden FG Solar Ltd**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In September 2025, ISCA Archaeology was commissioned by Eden FG Solar Ltd to produce an Archaeological Management Plan (AMP) for Forest Gate Solar Farm, Chippenham, Wiltshire (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') (Fig.1).
- 1.2. The development of the Site was granted approval of full planning permission with conditions on 9 March 2023 by Wiltshire (Planning Application: PL/2021/06112).
- 1.3. Condition 5 of this planning permission stipulated the following:

'No development shall commence within the area indicated by application PL/2021/06112 until:

- a) A written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and*
- b) The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

REASON: The matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order to enable the protection of any matters of archaeological interest.'

(Planning Application: PL/2021/06112)

- 1.4. This AMP has been prepared in response to, and as a partial update to, Condition 5 to ensure the preservation *in situ* of the archaeological resource identified by trial trench evaluations within four mitigation areas agreed with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service (WCAS) (Fig.2). These areas have been termed Archaeological Sensitive Areas (ASAs).

The Site

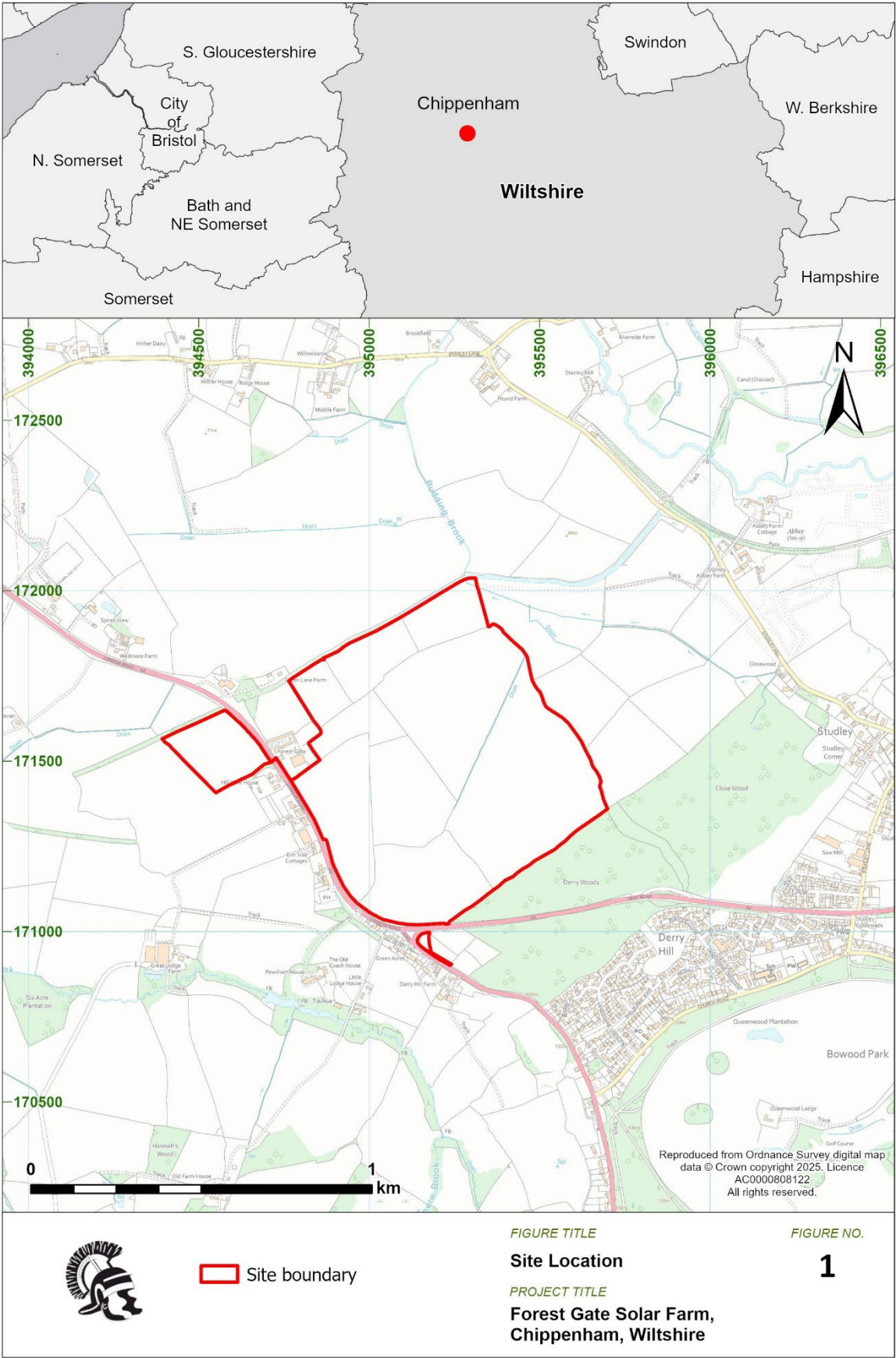
- 1.5. The Site is located c.4km to the south-east of Chippenham, Wiltshire. It comprises 13 fields and parts of two further fields, covering an area of approximately 64ha. The bulk of the Site lies to the north and east of the A4 (London Road) with a disused section of the Wiltshire

and Berkshire Canal and areas of woodland forming the northern and southern boundaries of the Site respectively.

- 1.6. The underlying bedrock geology of the Site is mapped as Oxford Clay Formation - Mudstone, formed in the Jurassic Period (BGS 2025). No superficial deposits are recorded.
- 1.7. Topographically, the Site is situated on a slight, north-facing slope at the base of Derry Hill; its south-eastern boundary lies at approximately 72m AOD, dropping away to approximately 55m AOD at its northern boundary.

Description of the Development

- 1.8. The development comprises the construction of a ground-mounted solar farm, using tilted photovoltaic (PV) panels, providing a peak output of up to 49.9MW of electricity at the point of connection to the electrical network. The solar farm and associated infrastructure will occupy an area of 64ha. Within this the solar panels will cover an area of 23.58ha and the associated infrastructure will cover approximately 1.12ha of the Site.
- 1.9. The specific development components are as follows:
 - ☞ Arrays of solar PV panels fixed on a metal framework;
 - ☞ 11 central inverter and transformer substation cabins;
 - ☞ One distribution network operator (DNO) substation;
 - ☞ One customer cabin and customer substation;
 - ☞ One spare part container;
 - ☞ 20 battery storage containers; and
 - ☞ Deer proof fencing along the Site boundary with access gates fitted with secured security cameras and an intruder detection system (IDS)
- 1.10. The development will progress in accordance with a phased plan. It is anticipated that the construction period will last a maximum of 26 weeks. During this time there will be a relatively small number of traffic movement, including some heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and staff vehicles. A construction compound, set to be 0.27ha, will also be established with facilities including cabins for meetings, changing rooms, a canteen, toilets, and storage containers for tools and equipment.



- 1.11. Once installed, the solar farm is expected to have an operational lifespan of 40 years. Following this, it will be decommissioned. This will involve the removal of all above ground structures and underground cabling, and the restoration of the land to its current baseline agricultural condition. It is estimated that this decommissioning phase will take approximately 6 to 9 months.

Archaeological Sensitive Areas (ASAs)

- 1.12. Trial trench evaluations carried out by Cotswold Archaeology (2021b) and ISCA Archaeology (2025) in relation to Condition 5 of the planning permission, identified a number of features of archaeological interest resulting in the identification of four mitigation areas agreed with the LPA and WCAS. The results of these evaluations are summarised in Section 2, 'Archaeological Background'.
- 1.13. Following consultations with the archaeological advisor to Wiltshire Council, it was agreed that each of these areas (ASAs) would constitute 'No Dig' zones. As such, the only development proposed within the ASAs would be PV panels mounted on concrete pads with no sub-surface impact.
- 1.14. The ASAs are illustrated in Figure 2 and summarised as follows:
- ☞ ASA A: an area measuring 45m by 45m relating to features identified within archaeological evaluation Trench 8 by Cotswold Archaeology (2021b), located within the western area of the Site to the east of London Road (Fig.3).
 - ☞ ASA B: an area measuring 45m by 45m relating to features identified within archaeological evaluation Trench 6 by Cotswold Archaeology (2021b), located within the south-western area of the Site to the east of London Road (Fig.4).
 - ☞ ASA C: an area measuring 45m by 45m relating to features identified within archaeological evaluation Trench 4 by Cotswold Archaeology (2021b), located within the south-western area of the Site to the east of London Road (Fig.5).
 - ☞ ASA D: an area measuring 10m by 10m relating to features identified within archaeological evaluation Trench 10 by ISCA Archaeology (2025), located to the west of London Road (Fig.6).

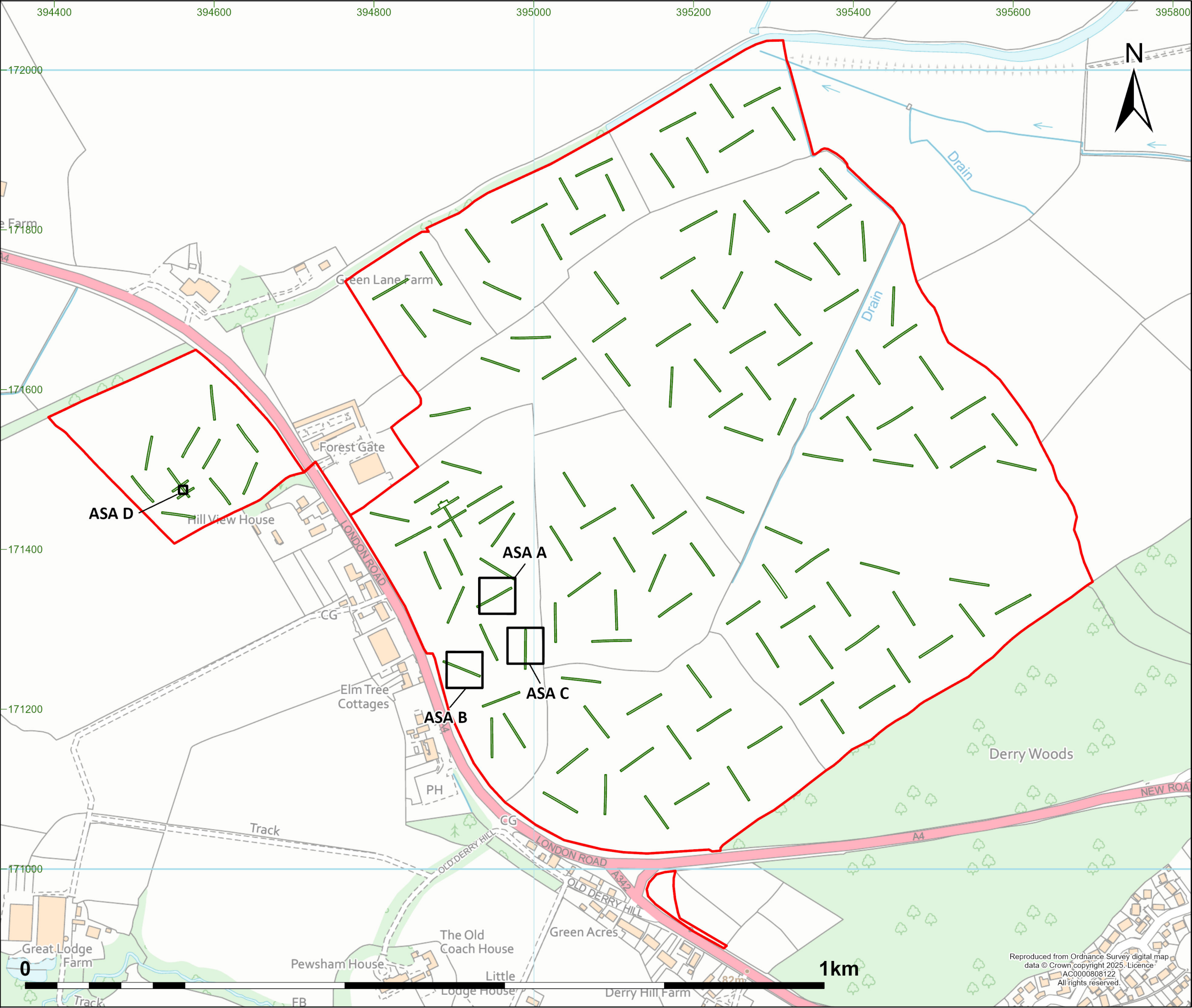
PROJECT TITLE
**Forest Gate Solar Farm,
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FIGURE NO.
2

FIGURE TITLE
**Archaeological evaluation trenches
and location of archaeological
sensitive areas (ASAs)**

-  Site boundary
-  Archaeological Sensitive Area (ASA)
-  Evaluation trenches

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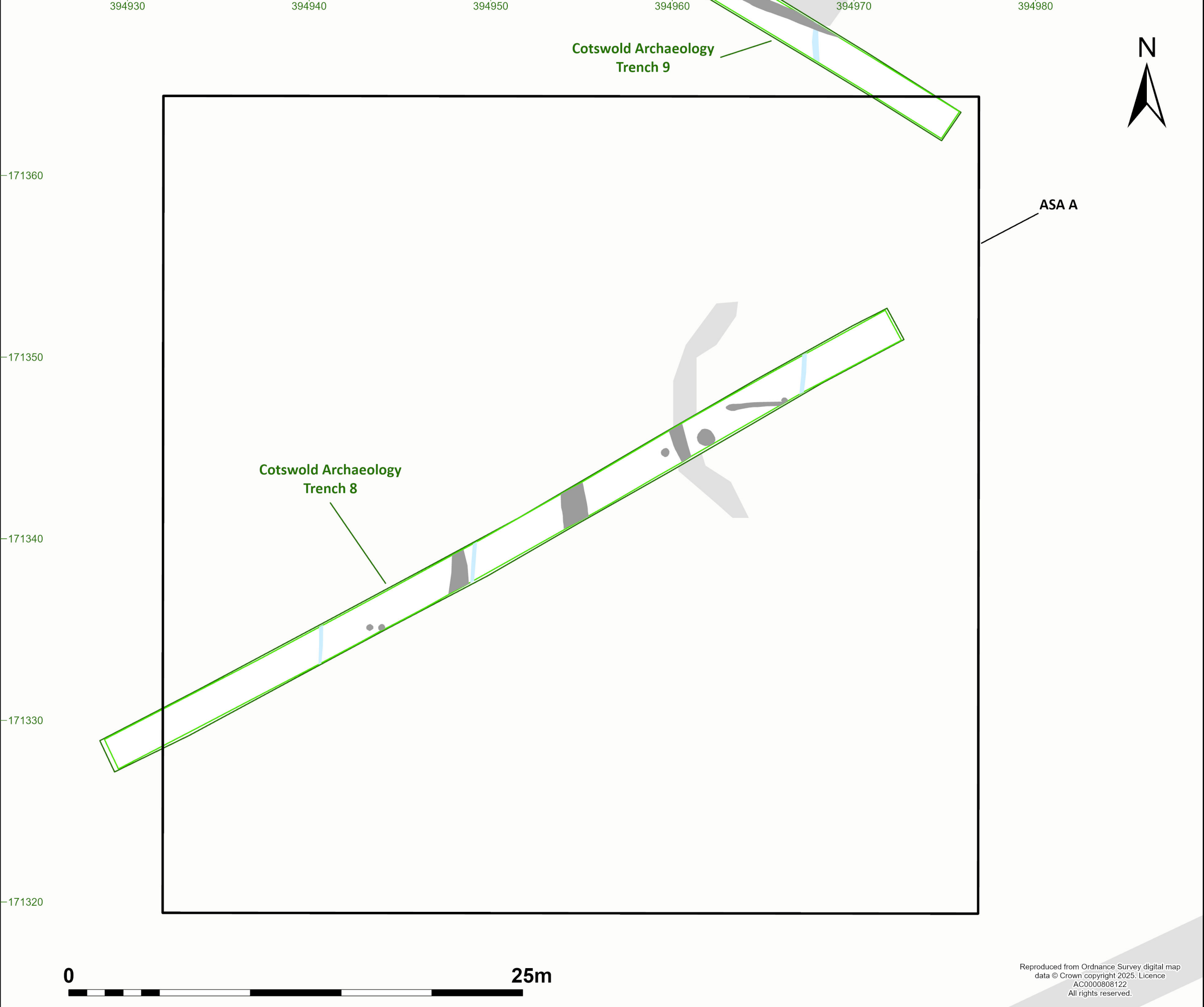
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**Forest Gate Solar Farm,
Chippenham, Wiltshire**

FIGURE NO.
3

FIGURE TITLE
**Plan of ASA A and associated
archaeological features**

-  Archaeological Sensitive Area (ASA)
-  Geophysical anomalies
-  High voltage cable
-  Limit of excavation (top)
-  Limit of excavation (bottom)
-  Archaeological features
-  Field drain
-  Service

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PROJECT TITLE

Forest Gate Solar Farm,
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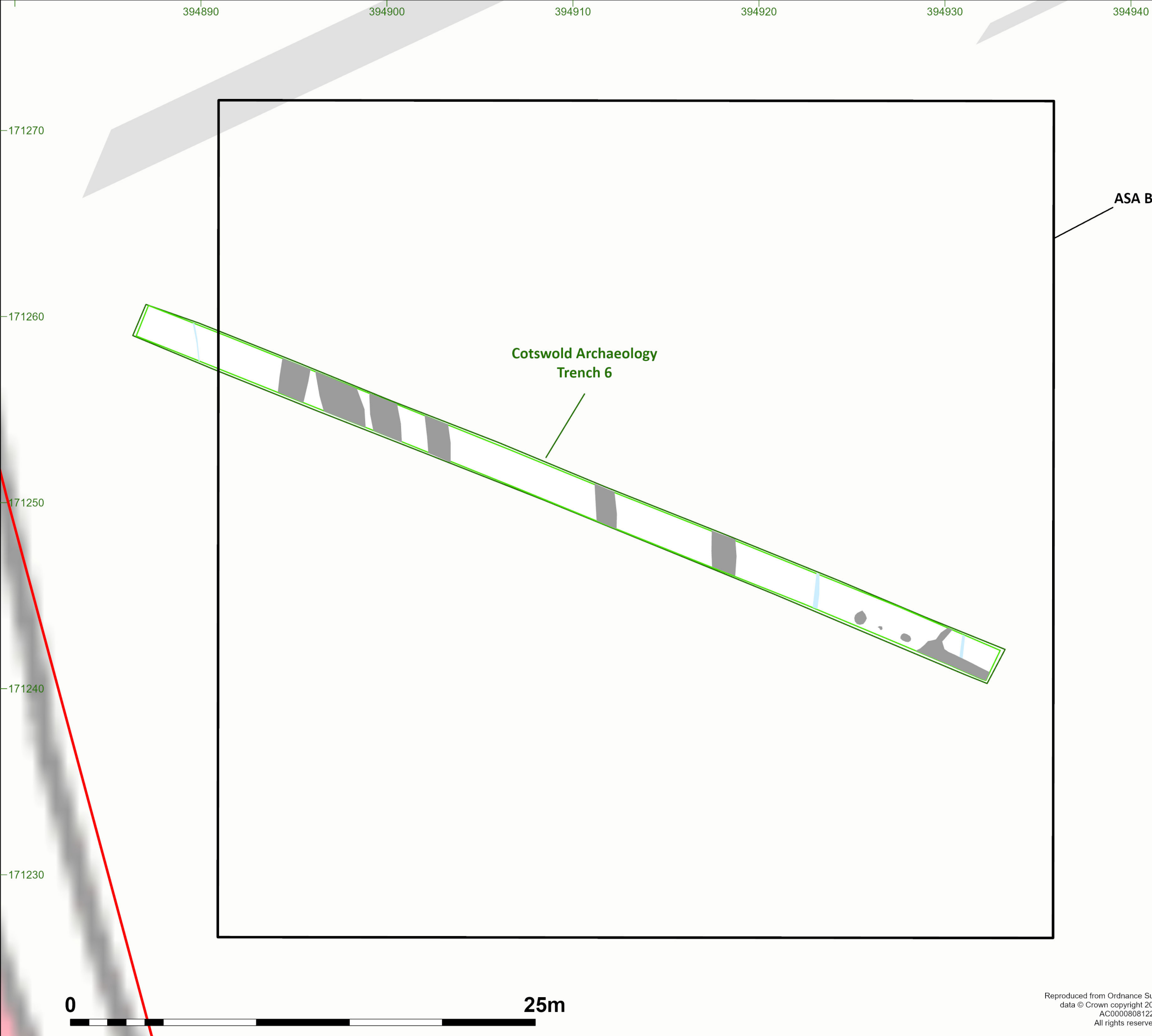
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FIGURE TITLE

Plan of ASA B and associated
archaeological features

-  Archaeological Sensitive Area (ASA)
-  Geophysical anomalies
-  High voltage cable
-  Limit of excavation (top)
-  Limit of excavation (bottom)
-  Archaeological features
-  Field drain
-  Service

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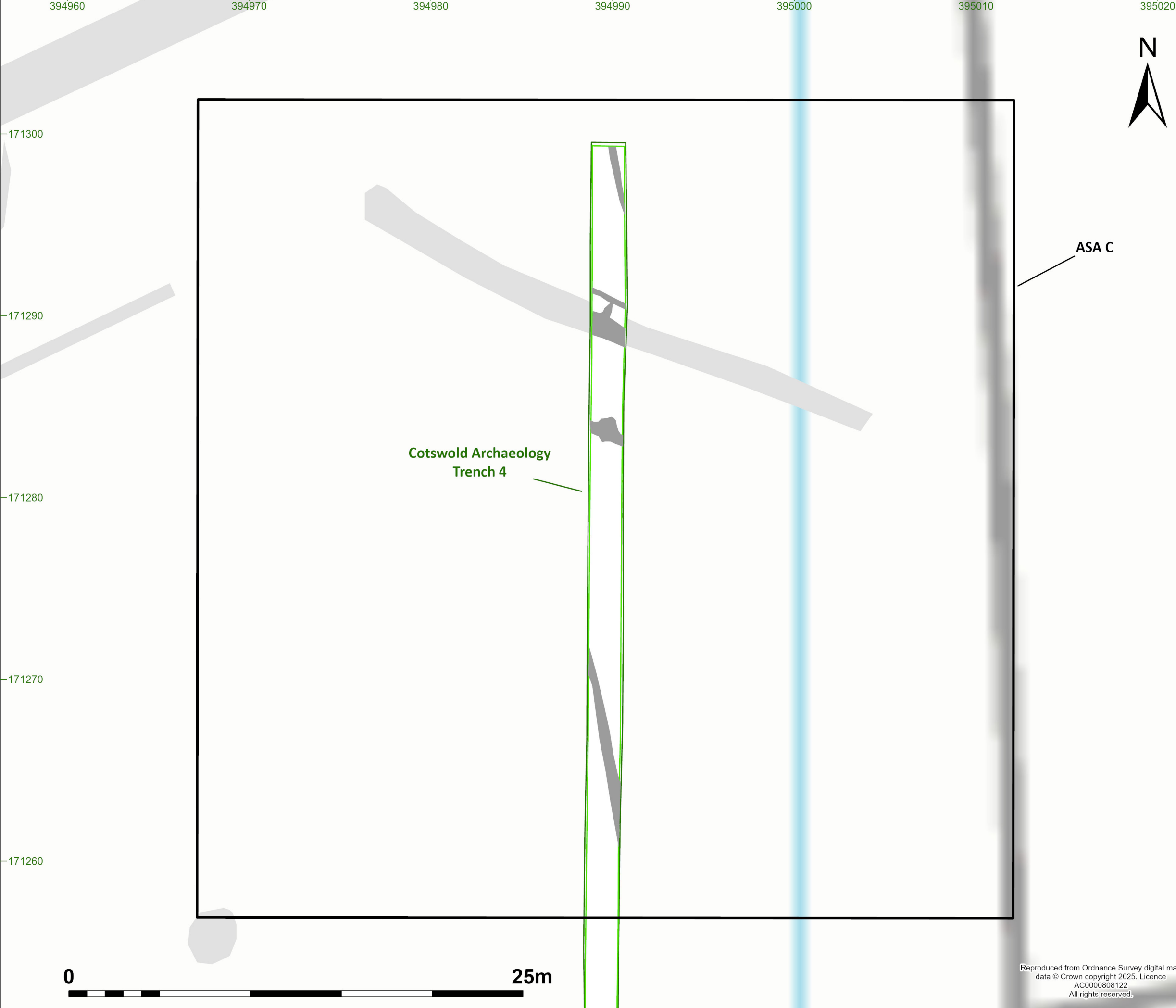
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FIGURE NO.
5

FIGURE TITLE
**Plan of ASA C and associated
archaeological features**

-  Archaeological Sensitive Area (ASA)
-  Geophysical anomalies
-  High voltage cable
-  Limit of excavation (top)
-  Limit of excavation (bottom)
-  Archaeological features
-  Field drain
-  Service

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PROJECT TITLE
**Forest Gate Solar Farm,
Chippenham, Wiltshire**

FIGURE NO.

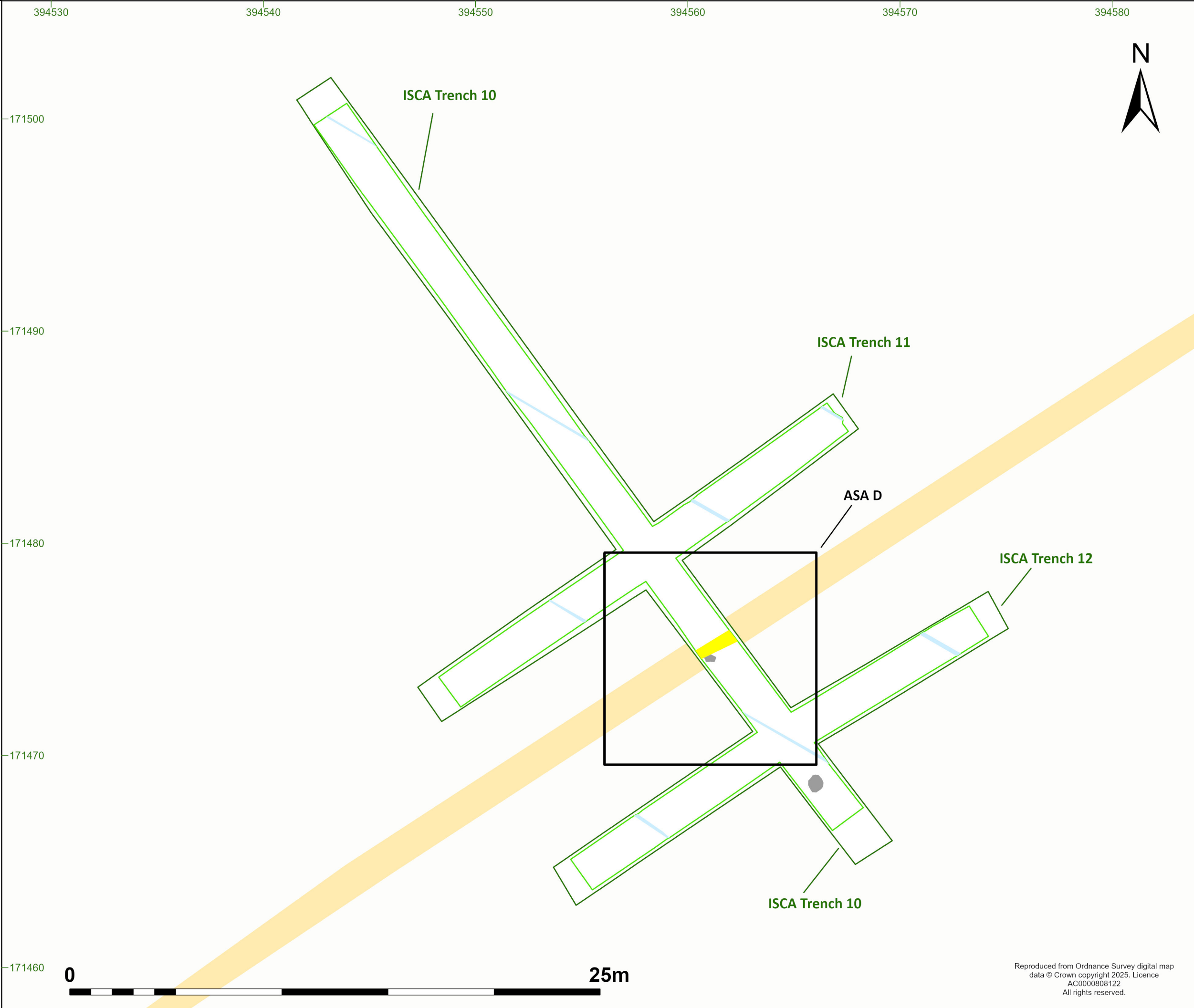
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FIGURE TITLE

**Plan of ASA D and associated
archaeological features**

-  Archaeological Sensitive Area (ASA)
-  Geophysical anomalies
-  High voltage cable
-  Limit of excavation (top)
-  Limit of excavation (bottom)
-  Archaeology
-  Field drain
-  Service

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Purpose of this Document

- 1.15. The following document describes and assesses the archaeological resource identified within the four ASAs and outlines the principles to be applied for the management of their conservation during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Site. The aim of this document is to ensure the preservation *in situ* of the archaeological resource.
- 1.16. Agreement will be sought between WCAS and the Developer (Eden FG Solar Ltd) regarding the long-term implementation and review of the AMP. It is understood that the responsibility for maintaining the solar farm and ensuring the protection of the archaeological resource will lie with Eden FG Solar Ltd. If the management responsibilities are transferred at any time during the solar farm's operational life, the agreed AMP must form part of the transfer agreement, ensuring that the principles, policies and maintenance requirements outline herein are fully complied with, including future condition assessments.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Site and a wider study area (a 1km radius from the centre of the Site) were subject to an archaeological desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2021a) and have been summarised below.
- 2.2. A quantity of flint debitage of Neolithic date is recorded close to the Site's southern boundary and a single coin of possible Iron Age origin is recorded from Derry Hill c.500m to the south of the Site. However, the provenance of these finds is not definitive and their presence may reflect manuring patterns or chance depositions rather than prehistoric activity.
- 2.3. Roman activity has been recorded within the nearby settlements of Studley and Derry Hill, c.450m east and c.450m south east respectively, and it is possible that these settlements have their origins in the Romano-British period as both are believed to lie in proximity to a Roman road. The specific location of this road is unknown but is thought to skirt Red Hill, c.400m to the south-east of the current site.
- 2.4. The Site lies c.150m to the south-west of the remains of the 12th century Cistercian Abbey at Stanley and within close proximity of the medieval settlements of Stanley, Studley and an

unnamed settlement at Hither Farm. Ridge and furrow earthworks and cropmarks suggestive of former field boundaries have been recorded within the Site itself.

Archaeological Fieldwork within the Site to Date

- 2.5. In respect to Condition 5 of the planning permission, the following archaeological surveys and evaluations of the Site have been carried out:

-  Archaeological desk-based assessment (Cotswold Archaeology 2021a)
-  Geophysical survey (Substrata 2020)
-  Trial trench evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2021b)
-  Trial trench evaluation (ISCA Archaeology 2025)

- 2.6. The results of these surveys and evaluations are summarised below.

Geophysical survey (Substrata 2020)

- 2.7. In October 2020, a magnetometer survey was conducted covering all but one field within the Site which was not surveyable due to crops and waterlogged conditions. The survey was successful in identifying 42 anomaly groups. Of these groups, 32 were characterised as representing possible buried archaeological deposits (Substrata, 2020, 2).
- 2.8. The results of the survey highlighted positive anomalies possibly pertaining to ditches within the vicinity of ASA A (Anomaly Group 13) and ASA C (Anomaly Group 17), and possible remnants of ridge and furrow and a former field boundary within the vicinity of ASA D. No anomalies were highlighted in association with ASA B.
- 2.9. As indicated below though, subsequent archaeological trial trench evaluations uncovered archaeological features whose presence had not been identified by the magnetometer survey.

Cotswold Archaeology trial trench evaluation (Cotswold Archaeology 2021b)

- 2.10. Between October and November 2021, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation consisting of 131 trenches within the boundaries of the Site on the eastern side of London Road.

- 2.11. This evaluation recorded evidence for an area of dispersed settlement in the south-west of the Site, with evidence for domestic hearths and metal working, as well as a late prehistoric ditch associated with Roman ditches, pits and postholes dating between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.
- 2.12. Evidence of medieval agricultural practice, namely the ploughed-out remains of ridge and furrow cultivation, was also identified during the evaluation. It is likely that these remains are contemporary with the occupation of Stanley Abbey, suggesting that the Site formed part of its agricultural hinterland. Post-medieval ditches, some of which correspond with field boundaries recorded on 19th-century cartographic sources, and furrows were also identified throughout the Site.
- 2.13. Undated features including ditches, pits and postholes, as well as a human cremation burial possibly contemporary with early Romano-British activity, were also recorded.
- 2.14. ASA A has been defined as a consequence of the archaeological resource identified in Trench 8 (Fig.3). This included an assemblage of over 250 sherds of Romano-British pottery, three ditches, two postholes, a circular pit, and evidence of metal working, hearth waste material and domestic waste. The presence of these features and finds suggested that the trench was located directly upon the area of Romano-British occupation.
- 2.15. ASA B and C have similarly been defined as a consequence of the evidence for human occupation identified in trenches 6 and 4 respectively (Figs.4 and 5). Trench 6 was associated with late prehistoric and Romano-British pottery, two ditches, and three pits/postholes. Trench 4 was similarly associated with late prehistoric and Romano-British pottery as well as animal bone, four ditches, a pit, possible posthole, and an unidentified sub-rectangular feature. Environmental samples from both of these trenches were suggestive of nearby hearth clearances.

ISCA Archaeology trial trench evaluation (ISCA Archaeology 2025)

- 2.16. In August 2025, ISCA Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation in the area of the Site on the western side of London Road. This originally comprised 10 machine excavated trenches but was increased to twelve following the discovery of a single cremation burial.
- 2.17. The evaluation produced a lack of archaeological finds. The Site was found to contain multiple field drains, indicative of poor drainage. This, combined with the paucity of results,

suggests that this area was unsuitable for settlement and formed part of the agricultural hinterland of surrounding settlement from prehistory and into the modern day.

- 2.18. ASA D has been defined as a consequence of the cremation recorded in Trench 10 (Fig.6). The cremation was square in plan and the upper fill contained burnt bone fragments, charcoal and small iron objects. It had been partially truncated by a high voltage cable and as such was not excavated for health and safety reasons. A pit/posthole was also recorded to the south-east of the cremation. Extensions to the trench (trenches 11 and 12) suggested these represented isolated features.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 3.1. As highlighted, following consultation with the archaeological advisor to Wiltshire Council, it has been agreed that no digging will take place within the ASAs identified and defined above.
- 3.2. The erection of solar PV panels in these areas will therefore adopt a non-penetrative mounting solution, namely ballasted foundations. These comprise ground-mounted steel plates with a specified applied weight consisting of either cast *in situ* concrete blocks, pre-cast concrete blocks or rock gabions, to provide the required structural ballast. Above-ground cable management solutions will also be deployed in these areas to ensure the 'No Dig' area is respected.
- 3.3. This AMP applies to the above identified ASAs, and will be implemented to ensure no impacts to archaeological remains within these areas; they will be preserved *in situ*. The methodology for ensuring the protection of the archaeological resource within these areas during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the development is set out below.

Construction Phase

- 3.4. To minimise disturbance to and ensure the protection of the archaeological resource within the 'No Dig' zone ASAs during the construction phase of the development, the following precautions are to be followed:

- ☞ Prior to the commencement of construction, the 'No Dig' zone ASAs (Fig.2) are to be surveyed and clearly demarcated using a method agreed with the LPA and WCAS.

Appropriate signage is to be erected to prevent unauthorised vehicle movements and digging within these areas.

- A suitably qualified archaeologist is to be present to ensure that the ASAs are correctly demarcated.

- 🔧 No subsurface excavation is to take place within the 'No Dig' zone ASAs.
- 🔧 Only vehicles required to facilitate the installation of the panels are permitted within the 'No Dig' zone ASAs; no vehicles should use these areas to transit across the Site.
- 🔧 No vehicles should enter the 'No Dig' zone ASAs during inclement weather or if the ground is sufficiently wet to allow wheel rutting to occur.
- 🔧 No storage of equipment, construction materials or vehicles will take place within the ASAs.
- 🔧 All construction works within the ASAs will be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist to ensure that the 'No Dig' zones are respected, and that no works are carried out which could potentially result in the disturbance of archaeological remains.

3.5. Given the nature of the archaeological resource, there exists a potential for unidentified archaeological features to exist with the Site beyond the ASAs. All sub-surface excavation activity has the potential to encounter features of possible archaeological interest.

3.6. Whilst it is not appropriate to apply archaeological monitoring and recording for all excavation activity, construction staff engaged in such activity should be informed, through tool box talks or written guides, to report all unusual finds or observations to allow the supervising archaeologist to visit, inspect, and where necessary, investigate and record any finds.

3.7. This is particularly important with regards human remains. Whilst the chance of encountering human remains during construction work is low, there are strict legal requirements for reporting and dealing with any finds of this type. Any bones found on site, even if there is a strong suspicion that they relate to an animal, must be reported to the supervising archaeologist to allow appropriate inspection and identification.

Operational Phase

- 3.8. Whilst the majority of potential impacts on the archaeological resource are anticipated to be associated with the construction phase of the development, it is considered that some impacts may occur during the operational phase of the solar farm.
- 3.9. To minimise impact to the archaeological resource within the ASAs during the operational phase, the following precautions are to therefore be observed:
- ☞ Vehicle movement around the Site during the operational phase is to utilise the network of new and existing tracks where possible.
 - ☞ During inclement weather or if the ground is sufficiently wet to allow any wheel rutting to occur, vehicles are to avoid accessing the ASAs.
 - ☞ No excavation works are anticipated during the operational phase. However, if excavation works are required within the ASAs, they will only be undertaken following appropriate discussion with the archaeological advisor to Wiltshire Council (or equivalent), and where necessary, will only take place under appropriate archaeological supervision.

Decommissioning Phase

- 3.10. The decommissioning phase of the solar farm is expected to take 6 to 9 months and will inevitably result in an intensive phase of works to remove all of the above ground structures and underground cabling and restore the land to its baseline agricultural condition.
- 3.11. To ensure the continued preservation *in situ* of the archaeological resource, the following precautions are to be observed:
- ☞ As for the construction phase, the ASAs are to be clearly demarcated using a method agreed with the LPA and WCAS (or equivalent). Appropriate signage is to be erected to prevent unauthorised vehicle movements and digging within these areas during the decommissioning phase.
 - A suitably qualified archaeologist is to be present to ensure that the ASAs are correctly demarcated.

- ☞ Only vehicles required to facilitate the decommissioning of the panels are permitted within the 'No Dig' zone ASAs; no vehicles should use these areas to transit across the Site.
- ☞ No vehicles should enter the 'No Dig' zone ASAs during inclement weather, or if the ground is sufficiently wet to allow wheel rutting to occur.
- ☞ Works to remove the panels within the ASAs should only take place in suitable weather conditions.
- ☞ Appropriate archaeological supervision is to be maintained within the ASAs during the decommissioning phase to ensure that no unauthorised works or disturbance to the archaeological resource occurs.
 - A short report summarising the works is to be produced and submitted to the archaeological advisor to Wiltshire Council (or equivalent) for approval.

3.12. If any further ASAs are identified during the ongoing assessment work or as a result of unexpected discoveries during construction, the decommissioning strategy should be updated to ensure that these features/areas are subject to appropriate measures or restrictions during decommissioning activity. Such measures, as agreed with the LPA and WCAS, might include restricting vehicle movements, restricting activity if weather conditions are not conducive, and greater use of hand removal of equipment.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. The archaeological impacts related to the development of the solar farm at Forest Gate have been thoroughly assessed through desk-based assessment, geophysical survey and archaeological trial trench evaluation.

4.2. The assessment and evaluation works have identified four archaeological sensitive areas (ASAs) that require preservation *in situ* (Fig.2):

- ☞ ASA A: an area measuring 45m by 45m relating to an area evidencing Romano-British occupation (Fig.3).

- 🦋 ASA B: an area measuring 45m by 45m relating to an area evidencing late prehistoric and Romano-British occupation (Fig.4).
- 🦋 ASA C: an area measuring 45m by 45m similarly relating to an area evidencing late prehistoric and Romano-British occupation (Fig.5).
- 🦋 ASA D: an area measuring 10m by 10m relating to a cremation burial left *in situ* (Fig.6).

4.3. These areas will be protected by 'No Dig' zones during the construction and decommissioning of the solar farm, and will be routinely monitored during its operational phase.

5. REFERENCES

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