

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

West Ashton, Trowbridge, Wiltshire (15/04736/OUT)

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1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- 1.1 RPS has been commissioned by Barratt Homes and Persimmon Home to prepare and agree a specification of works with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for a programme of archaeological recording that is required in association with a planning application (15/04736/OUT).
- 1.2 Condition 15 relates to archaeology and states:
- No development shall commence within any particular Phase or sub-Phase of the application site until:
- (a) A written programme of archaeological investigation for the Phase, which should include on-site 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.
- 1.3 This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlines the scope of a programme of archaeological recording and has been compiled based on the above correspondence from the archaeological advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The objective of this document is to provide the details, programme, methodology for the works, the means of reporting and the timescales for notification.
- 1.4 This project design and specification details the scope and methodology that has been agreed with the Local Planning Authority. It provides for the implementation of a programme of archaeological works and the reporting of these results, as appropriate. This WSI forms the basis for the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeological contractor to implement the works.

Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 1.5 The evaluation area is located to the north of the village of West Ashton south-east of Trowbridge, Wiltshire.
- 1.6 The site centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 387055 156407. West Ashton Road forms the sites western boundary, Leap gate the north, and Biss Wood to the east.
- 1.7 Existing ground levels vary only slightly across the site from 41 m AOD in the north to 44m AOD in the south-east.
- 1.8 The underlying geology is mapped as Mudstone of the Oxford Clay Formation. Superficial deposits are mapped as Alluvium and Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey).

Archaeological Background

- 1.9 The site has previously been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA), a geophysical survey and three phases of archaeological trial trench evaluation.
- 1.10 The DBA (Cotswold Archaeology 2011) stated:

No prehistoric artefacts or remains are recorded within the study [sic] area, and only a small number of sherds of Roman pottery, suggesting a generally low potential for the presence of currently unrecorded settlement of these periods within the site itself. However, the location of the site alongside the River Biss does raise some potential for unrecorded remains of this date to be present. Similar locations overlooking river valleys in the county are known to have been attractive

for prehistoric and Romano-British settlement, and have yielded the remains of prehistoric occupation.

- 1.11 The geophysical survey identified two locations within the site, one immediately west of Biss Farm and a second, 150 metres further west of the River Biss, containing responses that appear to represent two farmstead sites. The survey report concluded that, on the basis of their form, they are likely to be either Romano-British or medieval in date, but also that multi-phased occupation is likely given the geophysical responses. Apart from these responses of clear archaeological origin, and some possible pits near a stream running into the River Biss, there was very little in the results that could readily be identified as being of specific archaeological interest (GSB 2014).
- 1.12 Thirty-eight evaluation trenches were excavated within the site in 2014 (Cotswold Archaeology 2014). The earliest datable feature was a pit containing a possible Neolithic flint. A concentration of Early Roman ditched enclosures with associated trackways and pits/postholes was recorded in the northern and central parts of the site.
- 1.13 In 2022, Wessex Archaeology excavated 20 trial trenches within the site, each measuring c. 50m by 1.8m. Several Post Medieval/Modern features related to farming activities were identified during the trial trenching. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered, and few artefacts were collected, all residually occurring.
- 1.14 Wessex Archaeology returned to site in 2025 to excavate four trenches which could not be completed in the previous phase. Of the 4 trenches, 2 contained archaeological features comprising four ditches, which all contained pottery evidence suggesting a possible Romano-British date. The highly ephemeral features in Trench 2 were able to add dating evidence and confirm the presence of further activity close to Cotswold Archaeology Trench 21, satisfying one of the site-specific aims of this phase of work.

2 SCOPE OF WORKS AND ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Scope of Works

- 2.1 Seven areas have been identified for strip, map and sample. These are shown in Figure 2 and are as follows:

Area 1 – 25m x 25m centred on the Prehistoric features identified in Trench 2 of the 2014 evaluation.

Area 2 – Approximately 3ha centred on the Roman features identified in Trenches 4-9 of the 2014 evaluation.

Area 3 – Approximately 2ha centred on the Roman features identified in Trenches 11 and 13 of the 2014 evaluation.

Area 4 – 50m x 50m centred on the undated features identified in Trench 14 of the 2014 evaluation.

Area 5 – Approximately 0.5ha centred on the Roman features identified in Trench 16 of the 2014 evaluation.

Area 6 – Approximately 0.4ha centred on the late Prehistoric/Roman features identified in Trench 21 of the 2014 evaluation and Trench 2 of the 2025 evaluation.

Area 7 - Approximately 0.4ha centred on the Roman features identified in Trench 3 of the 2025 evaluation.

- 2.2 The boundaries of the excavation areas may be adjusted to avoid on-site constraints, such as public rights of way and buried/overhead utilities etc.
- 2.3 Archaeological excavation in each of the areas may be undertake in phases in accordance with the development schedule. The LPA archaeologist will be given advance notice of the commencement of archaeological excavation for each phase/area.

Objectives

- 2.4 The objective of the archaeological excavation is to record the archaeological remains present on site prior to their removal through development.

Specific Aims

- 2.5 Research aims will be in line with those outlined in The Archaeology of South West England Research Framework, Resource Assessment and Research Agenda (Webster, 2008).
- 2.6 Specific aims include:
- What is the date, character, extent, form, function, state of preservation and significance of archaeological features if present on the site?

3 METHOD STATEMENT

General

- 3.1 In order that the investigation supplies information of the required quality, the Codes, Standards and Guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) form a requirement of this specification. The requirements of the Local Planning Authority Archaeological Advisor will also be adhered to.

Methodology

- 3.2 During groundworks within the areas defined in Section 2, all topsoil and sub-soil will be stripped mechanically under archaeological direction, using a backward-pulling machine, equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Care will be taken not to machine into archaeological features or deposits, but it is important that the archaeological level is reached and not still covered by overburden. Where potential structural remains may be encountered, further testing of the depth of adjacent overburden by hand will be implemented in order to help ensure that appropriate levels have been reached without compromising any structural components. It is hoped that general hand cleaning can be kept to a minimum, so machine stripping needs to be well supervised and of a high quality, using a backward-pulling machine, equipped with a toothless bucket.
- 3.3 A site grid is to be established using a total station or GPS, which is to be tied into the national grid at the outset of the project.
- 3.4 Following stripping of overburden, priority will be given to the cleaning of features as required to produce a pre-excavation site plan. The stripped surface will be kept clean and free of loose spoil. Wherever possible spoil arising during hand-cleaning and hand-excavation will be stockpiled beyond the limits of excavation; where those limits are too distant to make off-site storage practicable then spoil will be stored on spoil-heaps set aside on areas of natural geology away from any archaeological features.
- 3.5 Areas containing particularly significant or sensitive archaeological remains should be protected, i.e., not left open to the weather.
- 3.6 Data-capture for site plans will be by electronic distance measurement, GPS survey, measured survey or a combination of these techniques; data-capture for site plans will as standard be capable of reproduction at a scale of 1:100; more complex features or areas of complex archaeological remains will be recorded at greater resolution (for reproduction at 1:10, 1:20, or 1:50 as necessary). The site grid will be established relative to the Ordnance Survey National Grid and all levels taken will be relative to Ordnance Datum.
- 3.7 The archaeological team is to be structured to ensure that the hand-cleaning and planning operations run in close sequence. The initial site plan should be updated as new features become apparent.
- 3.8 All sampling of archaeological features is to be by hand unless otherwise agreed in advance by the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor following on-site discussion.
- 3.9 The trenching strategy will be justified against the stated aims and objectives of the project and/or any other appropriate criteria. The various types of features and deposits revealed following the removal of non-significant overburden will be subject to the following sampling levels:
- domestic/industrial activity (post-holes, hearths, floor surfaces/floor make-up deposits) will be investigated by removing a 100% sample of the deposit from each feature within the trench. Where appropriate, for instance where the stratigraphy is complex, single context planning will be used.
 - Non-structural pits will require a 50% sample of the deposits from each feature unless the character, number or size of the pits makes this impractical. For instance, if a pit contains

several intersections and re-cuts, it would not always be appropriate to half-section it. In this situation, the archaeological contractor will consider 'quadranting' or single context planning. The strategy will need to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor. A 100% sample may be necessary should significant assemblages of finds be present;

- Non-structural post and stake-holes will require a 50% sample of the deposits from each feature to sufficiently clarify character, relationships and chronology;
- Non-structural linear cut features (e.g., field system ditches) will require a 5% sample of the deposits from each feature to clarify character, date and morphology. Intersections will be excavated and recorded to establish relative chronologies and ditch terminals will be investigated, where present and appropriate. Linear cut features related to occupation/stock enclosures will require a 10%-20% sample. Other minor linear features will also be sample excavated if appropriate to the understanding the site's character, date and morphology.

- 3.10 There may be cases when individual features do not merit these sampling levels. Any sampling variations would need to be approved in advance by the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor following on-site discussion.
- 3.11 Any human remains will be covered and protected. Where removal is necessary, it can only take place under an appropriate Ministry of Justice (MoJ) licence and environmental health regulations. Such removal must be in compliance with the Disused Burial Grounds Amendment Act 1981 (if appropriate). In the event that such remains are exposed the site archaeologist shall inform the developer, RPS Limited, local Environmental Health Officer and the Local Planning Authority's archaeological advisor in order that appropriate measures can be taken for their recording and removal.
- 3.12 Where removal of human remains is unavoidable, the remains will be cleaned with minimal disturbance, prior to recording and removal. Investigation and excavation of human remains will be undertaken by, or under supervision of, suitably experienced specialist staff and in accordance with ClfA Guidelines ("*Excavation and Post-excavation Treatment of Cremated and Inhumed Human Remains*" Roberts, C & McKinley, J 1993 – IFA Technical Paper 13; "*Guidelines to the standards for recording human remains*" ed. Brickley, M & McKinley, J 2004 – IFA Paper 7, updated by Mitchell and McKinley, ClfA 2017). Assessment of excavated human remains will be undertaken in line with current English Heritage Guidelines ("*Human Bones from archaeological sites: Guidelines for the production of assessment documents and analytical reports*" Centre for Archaeology Guidelines 2004).
- 3.13 Finds discovered by the Archaeological Contractor, falling under the statutory definition of Treasure (as defined by the Treasure Act of 1996 and its revision of 2002), will be reported immediately to the relevant Coroner's Office, RPS Limited, the landowner and the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor. A Treasure Receipt must be completed and a report submitted to the Coroner's Office within 14 days of understanding the find is Treasure. Failure to report within 14 days is a criminal offence. The Treasure Receipt and Report must include the date and circumstances of the discovery, the identity of the finder (put as unit/contractor) and (as exactly as possible) the location of the find. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft.
- 3.14 In order to establish clearly dated stratigraphic sequences, artefacts will be recovered carefully from feature intersections. Where artefact assemblages are concentrated, the percentage of sampling will be increased to ensure maximum retrieval and recording of this material.
- 3.15 Hand-recovery of artefacts will be supplemented by appropriate environmental sampling. This sampling will not normally be from feature intersections.
- 3.16 The sampling excavation strategy set out above will be reviewed continuously and, if necessary, amended in order to take account of changing circumstances. Any changes or amendments will be agreed with RPS Limited and the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor.

- 3.17 Deposits must be sampled for retrieval and assessment of the preservation conditions, and potential for analysis of all biological remains. A strategy for the recovery and sampling of environmental remains from the site should be agreed with an appropriate specialist, in advance of the project (see *Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods from sampling and recovery to post-excavation*: English Heritage/Centre for Archaeology Guidelines 2011): the sampling strategy should include a reasoned justification for selection of deposits for sampling, and should be developed in collaboration with a recognised bio-archaeologist.
- 3.18 In the event that any munitions or unexploded ordnance is uncovered, all works shall cease within the area and this will be fenced off. Its presence will be immediately reported to the local Police authority, RPS Limited and the client. No works will continue in the area until it has been made safe.

Recording Systems

- 3.19 All structures, deposits and finds are to be recorded according to accepted professional standards. The stratigraphy in any sections is to be recorded, even where no archaeological deposits have been identified.
- 3.20 The site archive will be so organised as to be compatible with other archaeological archives produced in Wiltshire. Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated or exposed will be entered onto prepared pro-forma recording sheets. Sample recording sheets, sample registers, finds recording sheets, access catalogues, and photo record cards will also be used. This requirement for archival compatibility extends to the use of computerised databases.
- 3.21 A plan to indicate the location of the boundaries of the excavated area and the site grid is to be drawn at a scale of 1:1250. Plans to indicate the locations of archaeological features are to be drawn at a scale of 1:100, with more detailed plans and sections as necessary. Detailed plans shall normally be drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 and sections at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20, depending on the complexity of the feature. All detailed plans and sections are to be related to the 1:100 plans. All plans are to be related to the site grid.
- 3.22 All archaeological sections will be on drawing film and will include context numbers and OD spot heights for all principal strata and features.
- 3.23 All archaeological contexts are to be recorded individually on context record sheets. A further, more general record of the work comprising a description and discussion of the archaeology is to be maintained as appropriate.
- 3.24 A full photographic record of the work is to be kept. All digital photography will be in high resolution uncompressed TIFF format, with a minimum 20 megapixel image capture. Image capture, storage and metadata standards as set out in the English Heritage (Historic England) Guidance note on Digital Image Capture and File Storage (Draft) are to be followed. The photographic record is to be regarded as part of the site archive and will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.
- 3.25 The archaeological contractor shall allow project records to be inspected and examined at any reasonable time, during or after the excavation work by the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor.
- 3.26 All artefacts recovered during the excavations on the site are the property of the landowner. They are to be suitably bagged, boxed and marked in accordance with the *United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, Conservation Guidelines nos. 2*.
- 3.27 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained. No finds will, however, be discarded without the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor.
- 3.28 Assessments of artefacts will be made by appropriately qualified named specialists.

- 3.29 All metal objects, other than late Post Medieval and Modern objects, will be X-rayed unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor.
- 3.30 All finds and samples will be treated in a proper manner and to the standards of the UK Institute of Conservators Guidelines. They will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the guidelines set out in the UK Institute for Conservation "Conservation Guideline No 2". Appropriate guidelines set out in the Museums and Galleries Commissions "Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections (1991)" will also be followed.
- 3.31 On completion of the project, it is anticipated that the landowner will consent the deposition of artefacts and archive in a suitable repository agreed with the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological Advisor.

Report and Archive

- 3.32 A grey literature report will be produced outlining the findings of the fieldwork. Details of style and format of this report are to be determined by the archaeological contractor. However, as in any event it should include:
- a non-technical summary;
 - an introduction:
 - the site location;
 - a methodology;
 - a description of the project's results;
 - an interpretation of the results in an appropriate context;
 - a summary of the contents of the project archive and its location (including summary catalogues of finds and samples);
 - site layout plans on an OS base, with the location of the trenches etc;
 - scaled plans of each trench/area of investigated works and each area in which archaeological features were recognised;
 - trench sections and feature sections (with OD heights);
 - site matrices where appropriate;
 - a consideration of evidence within its wider context and with regard to the stated objectives and specific research aims, including The Archaeology of the West Midlands Research Framework;
 - a summary table and descriptive text showing the features, classes and numbers of artefacts located, and soil profiles, with interpretation;
 - an evaluation of the methodology employed and the results obtained (i.e. a confidence rating);
 - a copy of the OASIS from.
- 3.33 Draft reports will initially be submitted to the Local Authority's Archaeological Advisor for comment/agreement prior to their formal submission and distribution.

- 3.34 All post excavation/site archive work shall be carried out according to the standards and procedures defined in MoRPHE. The post excavation analysis should consider the full range of scientific analysis of the remains including, but not limited to, radiocarbon dating, isotope analysis, residue analysis etc.
- 3.35 A Post Excavation Assessment and Updated Project Design shall be sent to the Local Authority's Archaeological Advisor for verification and comments.
- 3.36 Publication of the results will be required, even if negative. Reports with no or low significance of archaeological findings will be included as a note in a local journal.
- 3.37 Reports that do not provide sufficient information or that have not been compiled in accordance with the relevant sections of this specification will be returned to the Archaeological Contractor for revision and resubmission.
- 3.38 The site archive, to include all project records and cultural material produced by the project, is to be prepared in accordance with *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990)*. Arrangements for the deposition of the site archive will be agreed in writing with the relevant museum/archive.
- 3.39 The Wiltshire Museum, Devizes is considered to be the most suitable archive. The archaeological unit undertaking the fieldwork will arrange for an Accession Number in advance of work commencing. Their costing for the project will have included a budget for box fees etc.
- 3.40 The integrity of the site archive should be maintained. The archive of all records and finds must be prepared consistent with the principles set out in the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) English Heritage, 2006. It will include all materials recovered (or the comprehensive record of such materials) and all written, drawn and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken. It will be quantified, ordered, indexed and internally consistent. It will also contain a site matrix, a site summary and brief written observations on the artefactual and environmental data.
- 3.41 Prior to formal deposition of the archive, it will be required to be temporarily stored by the Archaeological Contractor in a suitable location and condition, such to ensure that no part of the archive will suffer degradation. The archive is to be deposited promptly with the receiving museum as and when their capacity to receive such is established, following which it will then become publicly accessible.
- 3.42 Any digital archive generated by the archaeological works will be compiled in accordance with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) standards and guidelines. It will consist of:
- All relevant born-digital data (images, survey data, digital correspondence, site data collected digitally etc.); and;
 - Digital copies made of all other relevant written and drawn data produced and/or collected during fieldwork and as part of the subsequent post-excavation analysis phase.
- 3.43 The digital archive will be deposited with the ADS within three months of acceptance of the final report/publication.
- 3.44 Any spatial data generated will be submitted to the HER in a suitable GIS format (shapefile, Mapinfo, TAB etc.).

Data Management Plan

- 3.45 The archaeological contractor undertaking the fieldwork will provide as part of their method statement a Data Management Plan. The Data Management Plan will describe the type of data that will be acquired and/or generated during the project, the way the data will be managed and stored and the mechanisms to be employed to preserve and share the data.

Provisional Programme

- 3.46 A detailed timetable for site works has not yet been agreed. The LPA's Archaeological Advisor will be notified at least two weeks prior to commencement of work on site.

Monitoring Meetings

- 3.47 Reasonable access to the site is to be arranged for the LPA's Archaeological Advisor (or their representative), to make site inspections to ensure that the archaeological investigations are progressing satisfactorily.
- 3.48 Arrangements for these meetings will be made through RPS.

Public Benefits

- 3.49 In accordance with ClfA/IHBC guidelines RPS Heritage's role is to assist clients in delivering positive heritage outcomes to their development proposals by preserving our Heritage and generating and disseminating information on past communities as a public benefit. RPS will consistently advise clients on the public benefits of high quality archaeological and heritage work and its potential to deliver positive publicity for clients and their developments while also educating and informing the wider public.

4 GENERAL SITE REQUIREMENTS

Archaeological Contractor

- 4.1 The Archaeological Contractor will be a ClfA Registered Archaeological Organisation.
- 4.2 The field team deployed by the Archaeological Contractor will include only full time professional archaeological staff. All staff in supervisory positions should be members, at an appropriate level, of the ClfA.
- 4.3 The composition of the project team must be detailed and agreed in advance with RPS (this is to include any subcontractors).
- 4.4 The following statutory provisions and codes of practice are to be adhered to where relevant:
- all statutory provisions and by-laws relating to the work in question, especially the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
 - the ClfA Code of Conduct;
 - the ClfA Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology; and
 - the Country Code.

Copyright

- 4.5 It is recognised that the copyright of written, graphic and photographic records and the report rests with the originating body. However, RPS and their client require an agreement to facilitate the copying and use of any or all materials resulting from this project.

Variations

- 4.6 Variations to this Written Scheme of Investigation that the Archaeological Contractor may wish to make must be approved, in advance, by RPS, the client, and the LPA's Archaeological Advisor.

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 All relevant health and safety regulations must be followed including, but not exclusively:
- The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974),
 - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999),
 - Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002),
 - The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015), where relevant, and
 - The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (2013).
- 5.2 A risk assessment and method statement will be prepared and a copy will be sent to RPS and the client prior to commencement of the contract. Where a site is operating under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015), all works will be implemented in accordance with a Construction Phase Plan prepared by a Principal Contractor. Neither RPS nor the Archaeological Contractor will act as the Principal Contractor.
- 5.3 Machinery will be kept away from unsupported edges and access routes will be supervised and controlled. Hi-visibility plastic mesh and warning notices will be installed as appropriate. Safety helmets, safety footwear and high visibility jackets are to be used by all personnel as necessary.
- 5.4 Where excavation edges may be deemed to be unsafe, then 'battering back' may be necessary. Details of this will be included within the risk assessment, if necessary.
- 5.5 The client will supply all necessary information to the archaeological contractor concerning services on the site. All areas to be excavated will be scanned with a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT Scanner), by a suitably competent individual prior to and during topsoil and subsoil removal works. Extreme care will be taken to ensure that any services located are avoided.



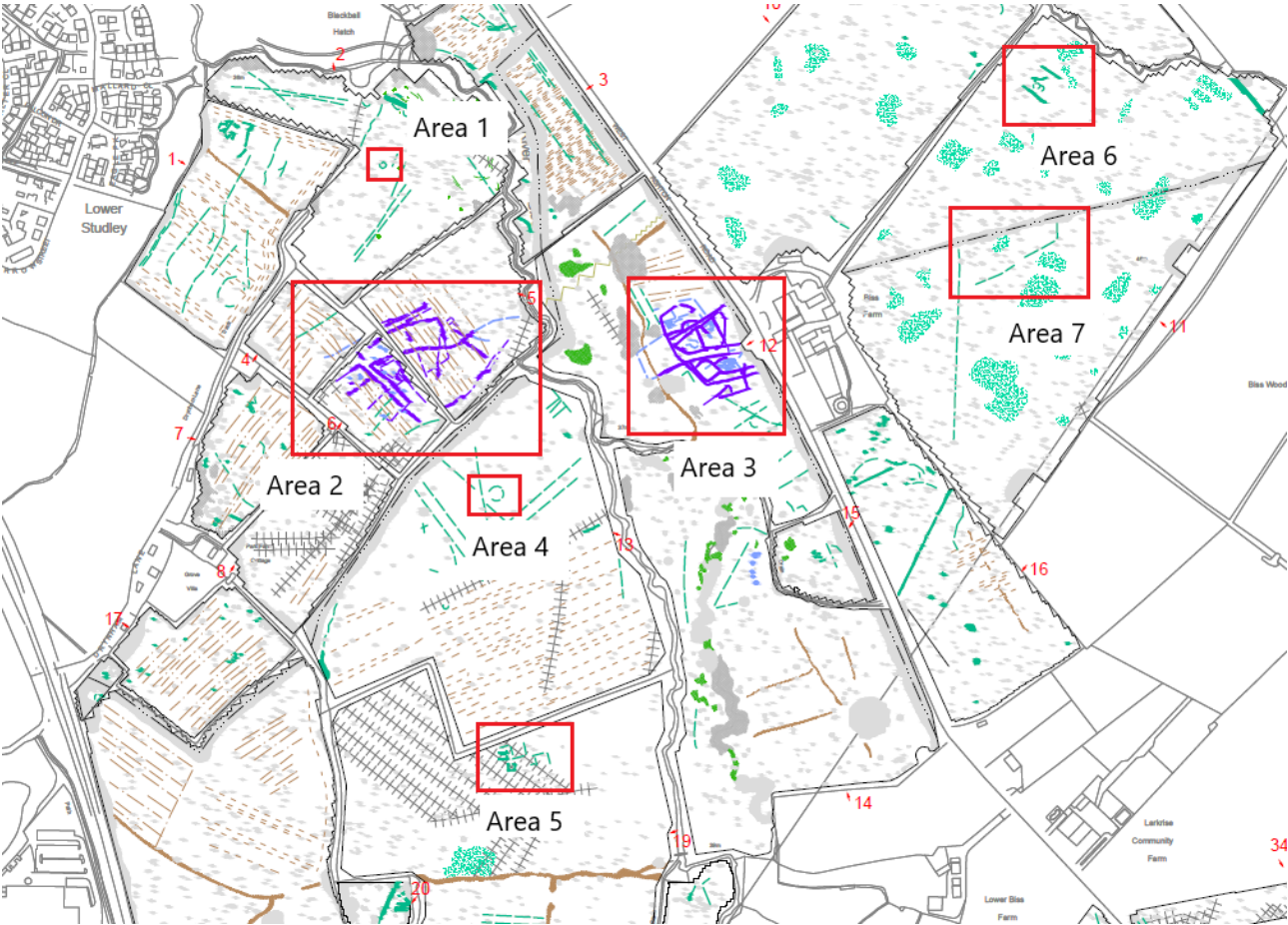


Figure 2 – Proposed Excavation Areas – General Locations



Figure 3 – Area 1

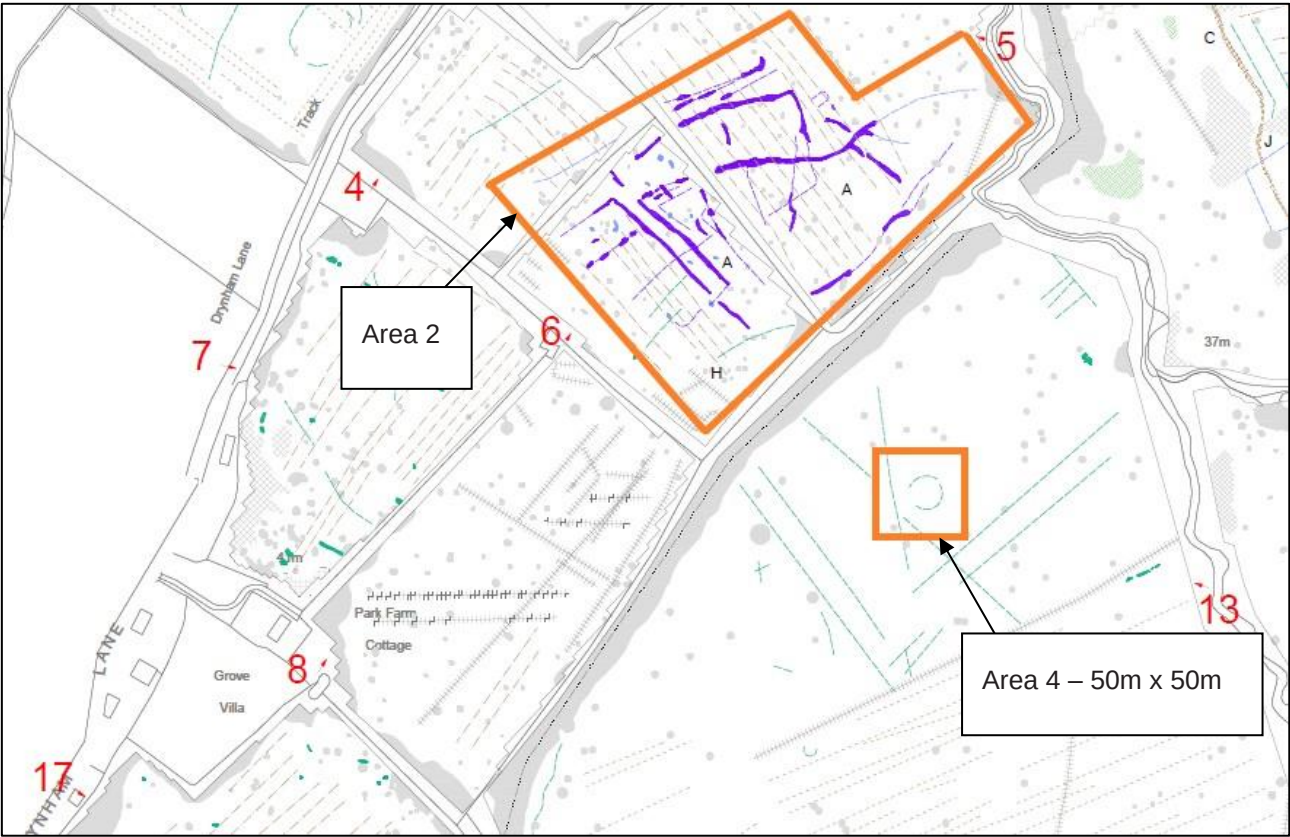


Figure 4 – Areas 2 and 4

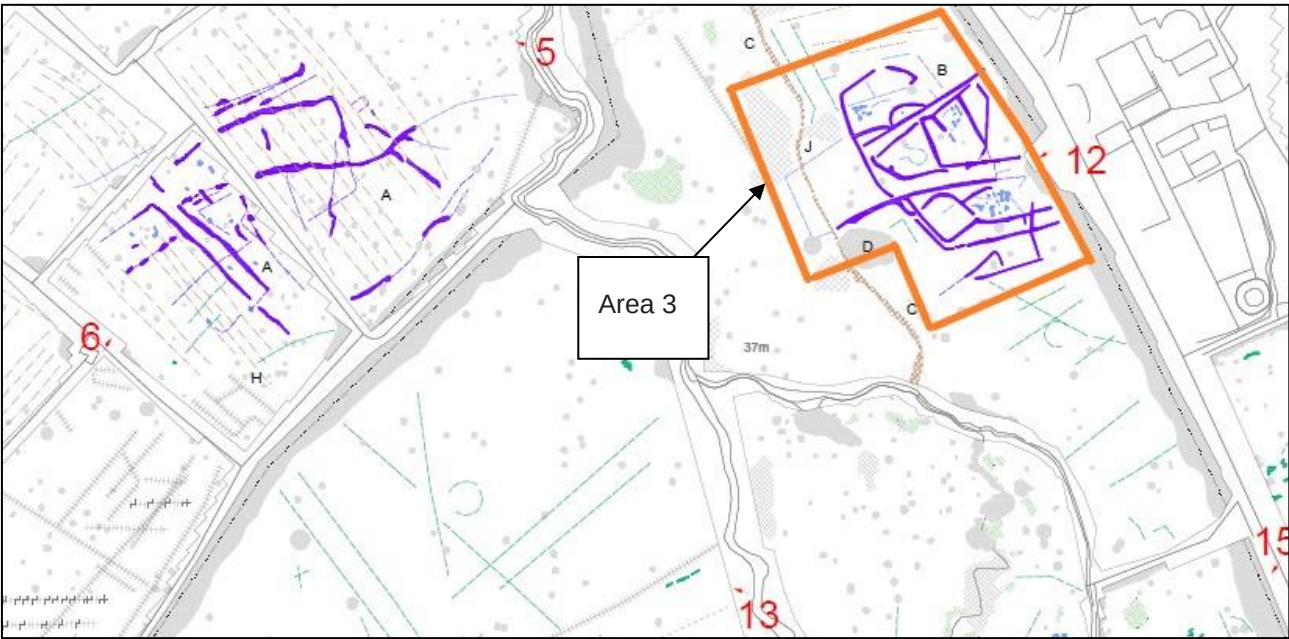


Figure 5 – Area 3

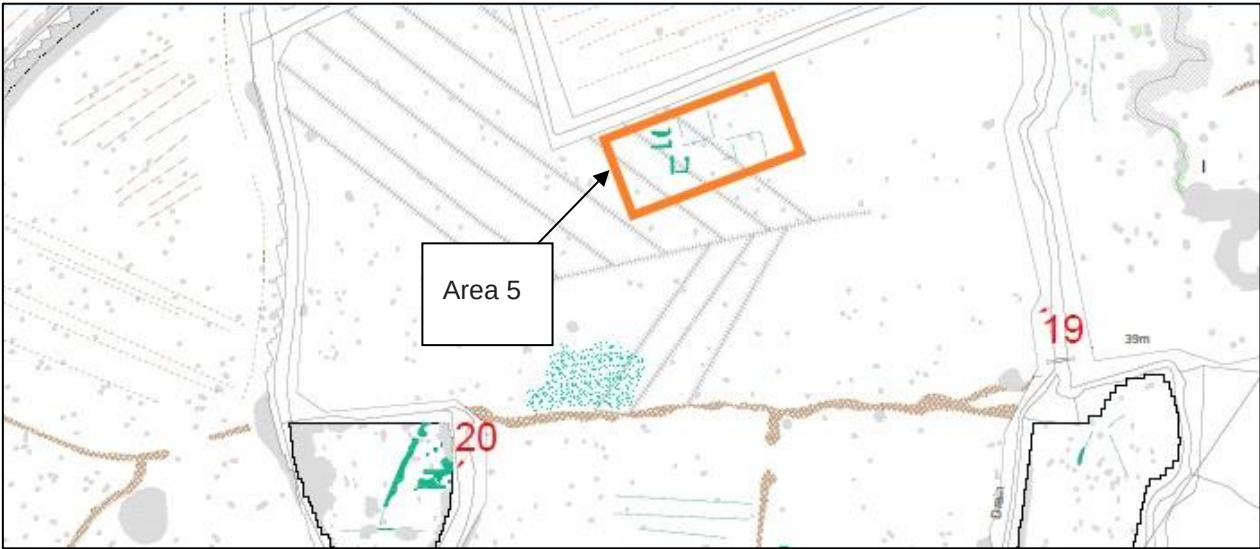


Figure 6 – Area 5

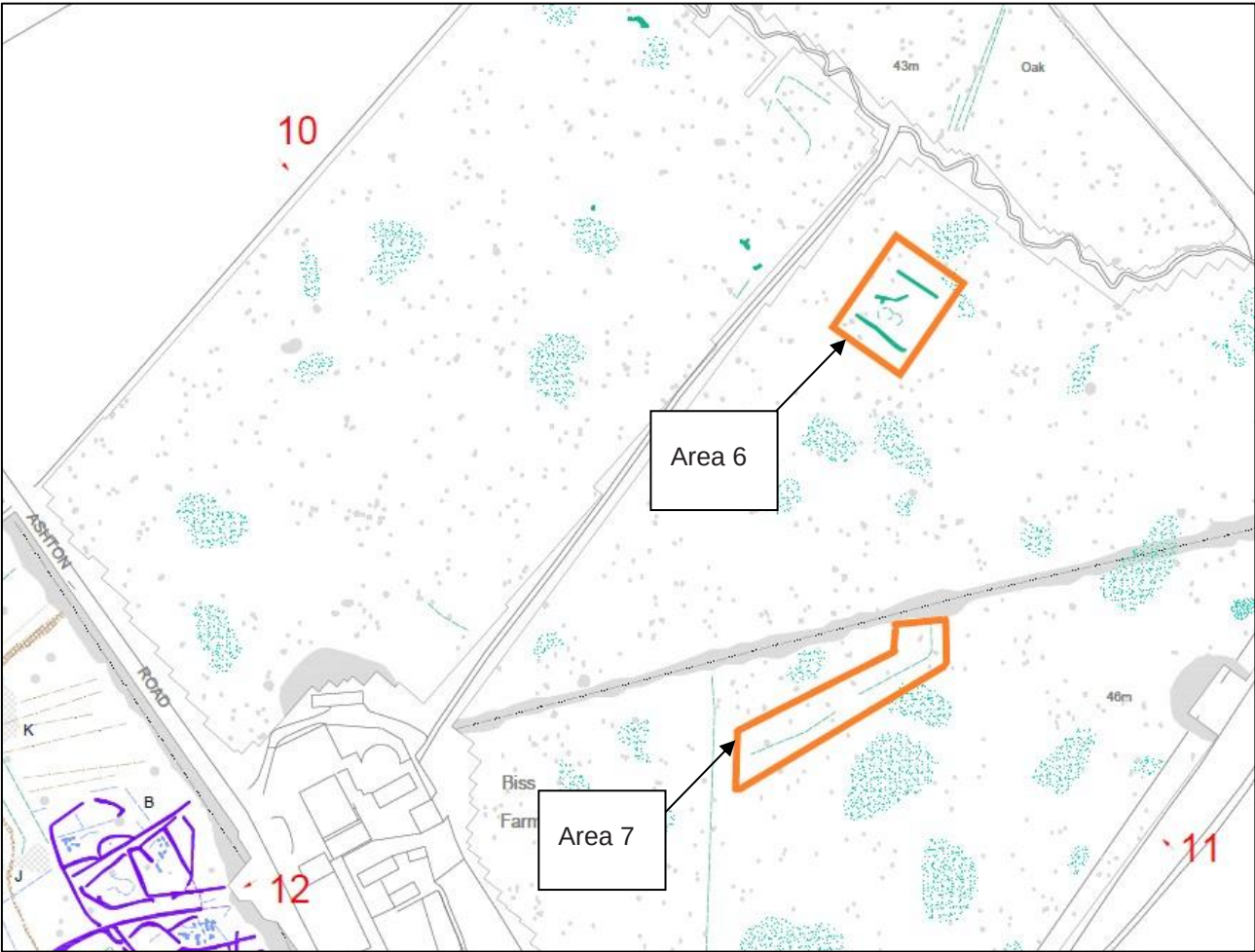


Figure 7 – Areas 6 and 7