

LAND ADJACENT TO HIGH POST BUSINESS PARK, SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE

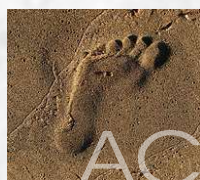
(Centred on NGR SU 14809 36826)

Project Design for an archaeological trench evaluation

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archaeology

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This document sets out proposals to undertake an archaeological trench evaluation on land adjacent to High Post Business Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire (centred on NGR SU 14809 36826). It represents the Written Scheme of Investigation required to provide supporting information for a forthcoming planning application for new office buildings, industrial/storage facilities, road access including a new roundabout, two fields of solar installation and associated infrastructure. The scope of work is being carried out following consultation with the Wiltshire Council Assistant County Archaeologist (hereafter WCACA).
- 1.2** The archaeological work will be carried out by AC archaeology and had been commissioned by Atlas Planning Group on behalf of their clients.
- 1.3** The site comprises an irregularly shaped area of almost 10.5 hectares located between the existing High Post Business Park to the west and Fourmile Hill (the A345) and the High Post crossroads to the east. It comprises part of a wider arable field situated on ground that descends across south and east-facing slopes from an elevation of approximately 134m to 118m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The meandering valley of the River Avon is roughly 1.5km to the west. The underlying bedrock geology comprises chalk of the Seaford Chalk Formation (British Geological Survey 2026). In places this is overlain by superficial chalk-derived head deposit, comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel, located primarily on the summit of the hill and higher slopes of the Avon Valley.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** As part of the current development proposals, the site has been subject of a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (Hegarty 2026) and geophysical survey (Edwards and Trick 2026). A previous geophysical survey had also been undertaken that provided partial coverage of the site (Plesnicar 2024).
- 2.2** The assessment identified that the site is largely situated within a plot of agricultural land that was probably enclosed from chalk downland in the early 19th century. It was likely to have been used as common land, primarily for grazing prior to enclosure and has been under arable cultivation since, with the exception of the brief period immediately prior to and after the Second World War when it operated as a small aerodrome. A Second World War pill box is situated in the northwest of the site.
- 2.3** Despite relatively close proximity to the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site, the known archaeological resource within the assessment study area is dominated by late prehistoric and Romano-British activity, with the A345

defining the eastern boundary to the site following the putative course of a Roman road (Hegarty 2026). Recent archaeological investigations have confirmed the presence of enclosed Iron Age settlement to the immediate northwest within the existing business park and southeast of the application site. There are no known features relating to early settlement within the application site but aerial survey and lidar data indicates that probably contemporary field systems surrounding the application site are more widespread than previously recorded.

- 2.4 The geophysical surveys of the application site have identified ditched curvilinear features crossing the eastern part of the site (Plesnicar 2024), while to the west a limited number of linear anomalies have the potential to represent former subdivisions of the existing field pattern (Edwards and Trick 2026). The geophysical survey results therefore indicated the potential for late prehistoric to Romano-British remains to be present within the east of the site.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the archaeological trench evaluation is to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character, date and significance of any archaeological features, deposits and finds within the site, with particular reference to the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. The results of the work will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation that may be required should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with this document and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' documents *Standard for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2023a) and *Universal Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2023b).
- 4.2 The evaluation will comprise the machine excavation of 35 trenches totalling 1050m in length, with each trench c.1.8m wide. This represents a 2% sample of the site. In addition, up to a further 2% trenching contingency will be held in reserve if there is a need for further clarification during the initial evaluation. This contingency would only be implemented if requested by the WCACA following consultation. Trench locations are shown on Fig. 1 and are positions to target anomalies identified from the geophysical survey, as well as testing 'blank' areas to confirm the effectiveness of the survey. All trenches will be located using a Leica Net rover GPS, with sub-10mm accuracy, but may be subject to change based on site conditions, for example if unrecorded buried or overhead services are present.
- 4.3 The removal of overburden will be undertaken under the control and direction of the site archaeologist. Non-archaeological overburden will be removed by mechanical excavator in spits no greater than 20cm in depth, using a toothless bucket and stored alongside the trench. Topsoil and subsoil will be separated. Stripping by mechanical excavator will cease at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil is exposed. If expansive deposits, such as alluvium or colluvium are exposed, then in consultation with the WCACA either machine or hand-cut sondages will be excavated at intervals throughout the relevant trench in order to establish the layer sequence, and if possible, secure relevant dating evidence. If deeper trenches (i.e. below 1.2m) are present, then these may need to be stepped to allow safe working.
- 4.4 Following completion of overburden removal, or as soon as safe working allows, the trench bases will be cleaned by hand, where necessary, and any subsoil deposits

identified. Spoilheaps will be scanned with a metal detector, by a suitably trained member of staff, for displaced artefacts which will be recovered. A decision will then be made as follows:

a) if there are no archaeological deposits present, the trench will be recorded as per methodology for Negative trenches in section 4.5.1; or,

b) if there are deposits of potential archaeological origin (Positive trenches), these deposits will be excavated and recorded as per methodology in section 4.5.2.

No backfilling will be carried out until approved by the WCACA.

4.5 Excavation and recording methodology

4.5.1 Negative trenches

In the case of trenches assessed to contain no archaeological features or deposits and deemed to be Negative, the archaeological recording will comprise:

- Completion of a *pro forma* trench summary, which includes project and field cross-references, trench dimensions, a description of the nature and depth of overburden, the nature of the exposed natural subsoil and a scale drawing of part of at least one trench section;
- recording of a datum level on the section; and,
- a digital photograph showing a view of the entire trench and one showing the base and part of at least two sides of the excavated trench, including the recorded section.

4.5.2 Positive trenches

In the case of trenches assessed to contain archaeological features or deposits and deemed to be Positive, the archaeological recording will comprise two stages. The first stage will comprise:

- completion of a record as set out in 4.5.1.

The second stage will comprise manual archaeological excavation and recording as follows:

- All exposed archaeological features and deposits will be excavated by hand to the following sample levels; the full excavation of small discrete features (pits, postholes etc., but a sample only of features present in high numbers, e.g. stakeholes), half-sectioning (50% excavation) of larger discrete features and, long linear features will be excavated to sample 20% of their length – with hand investigations distributed along the exposed length of any such features, specifically targeting any intersections, terminals or overlaps. Should the above percentage excavation not yield sufficient information to allow the form and function of archaeological features/deposits to be determined, the sample may need to be increased or the full excavation of large or linear features/deposits may be required. Additional excavation may also be needed for the taking of palaeoenvironmental samples and recovery of artefacts.
- If substantial numbers of archaeological features of a similar character are exposed - such a rows of post- or stake-holes, then, in agreement with the WCACA, a sample of such features will be excavated as part of the evaluative exercise.
- If complex or extensive archaeological features or stratigraphy are exposed, then their extent, nature and depth only will be determined by these investigations. No

attempt will be made to fully excavate any such deposits. However, the full depth of archaeological deposits will be assessed.

- One long section of each trench will be cleaned by hand.
- Where human remains are encountered they will wherever possible be left *in situ*; where this is not possible, their excavation and removal will be undertaken on receipt of the appropriate licence from the Ministry of Justice. Any consents or licenses required will be obtained on behalf of the client by AC archaeology.
- If expansive deposits, such as colluvial or alluvial layers or quarry pits are present in any trench, then machine-cut sondages will be excavated at intervals throughout the relevant trench, until at such time the layer sequence is confirmed.
- Should *in situ* structural remains be encountered, then sufficient excavation will be undertaken to confirm the function, sequence, chronology and method of construction.
- Any object which falls under the definition of treasure, as defined by the Treasure Act 1996 and the 2023 Explanatory Memorandum to the Treasure Act 1996: Code of Practice (3rd Revision), will be reported to the local coroner within the notice period. The object or objects will be removed to a safe place on the day of discovery or excavation. 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.

4.6 Recording

All artefacts or deposits revealed will be recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*. Trenches will be gps mapped while plans will be drawn at a scale of 1:50 or at 1:20 if more detail is needed. Sections of features and baulk sections at 1:10 or 1:20 will be drawn as appropriate. An overall trench location plan will be prepared at a scale of 1:1,000 or 1:2,000 and related to published property boundaries. All site levels will be related to Ordnance Datum. All metal finds and other typologically distinct or closely dateable artefacts will be recorded three-dimensionally.

- 4.7** A comprehensive photographic record of all archaeological deposits will be made in both plan and section. This will comprise colour digital format only (minimum 16 megapixels), illustrating in both detail and generally the principal features and finds discovered. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted. A photographic scale shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. Guidance as set out in Historic England (2015a) *Digital Image Capture and File Storage: Guidelines for Best Practice* will be followed.

4.8 Finds and samples

All finds will initially be retained and examined by the AC archaeology Finds Manager in consultation with relevant specialists. Following this initial examination, later post-medieval and modern finds will not be retained except where they are items of intrinsic interest, or their further examination is considered necessary for the dating of specific features or deposits or for the interpretation of a site.

- 4.9** Necessary conservation work, including any on-site emergency conservation actions, will be undertaken by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum Conservation Laboratory, Exeter, who regularly provide sub-contract services and conservation advice to AC archaeology.

- 4.10** All artefacts recovered are to be washed (where the condition of the material allows) and marked. Finds will be bagged, boxed labelled and stored in accordance with

current UKIC guidelines as set out in *Guidelines for the treatment of finds from archaeological sites*. Appropriate separation will be maintained of bulk finds from those small or delicate objects requiring special treatment or packaging.

4.11 Where deposits of palaeoenvironmental potential are encountered, including carbonised or waterlogged organic deposits, these will be sampled as appropriate in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 2011). Sampling will be undertaken in consultation with the Historic England Scientific Advisor.

4.12 The following techniques will be used:

- 40/60 litre bulk samples will be taken from any deposits relevant for environmental sampling (waterlogged deposits, peat deposits etc). Bulk samples will be sub-sampled as appropriate.
- If it is felt appropriate by the relevant specialist (see below), samples taken (both bulk samples and monolith tin samples) will be examined for pollen, diatoms, insect, plant macrofossils and molluscs.
- Bulk samples will be processed using the standard flotation/sieving methods, with the float collected on a mesh size of 250 microns. Residues will be sieved through mesh sizes of 5.6mm, 2mm and a minimum of 500 microns.
- Monolith tin samples, with tins measuring no more than 500mm in length, will be overlapped in the standard way to allow for a continuous sample of the entire sequence to be taken. Samples will be adequately recorded and labelled. A register of samples will be made and sampling record sheets (Using the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system – see section 4.6 above) will be completed for all samples taken and will include the following information: sample type, reason for sampling, sample size, context, sample number, spatial location, date, context description and the approximate percentage of the context sampled. The samples will be recorded on the relevant site section drawing and photographs of the sample locations taken.
- Radiocarbon samples will be taken and dates obtained if sufficient material from relevant deposits is located. AMS dating can be taken from monolith samples. If early peat deposits are encountered, the Historic England Science Advisor will be consulted to discuss the method of sampling for radiocarbon dating.
- If surviving animal bone is encountered then the English Heritage (2014) guidance Animal Bones and Archaeology will be used (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/archaeological-science/environmental-archaeology/>).

5. THE PROJECT ARCHIVE

5.1 Depending on findings, a fully integrated site archive will be prepared with reference to the Historic England (2015b) document *Management of Archaeological Projects* (Appendix 3) and Brown, DH, 2011, *Archaeological Archives A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation*. A digital archive will be compiled in accordance with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) standards and guidelines, and AC archaeology's *Archaeology Data Management Plan for Digital Archives* (Coles 2018). 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.
- 5.2** The digital archive will be deposited with the ADS within three months of acceptance of the final report.
- 5.3** The finds and paper archive will initially be stored at the offices of AC archaeology in Bradninch, under an accession number (requested and pending) issued by the Salisbury Museum, Salisbury. On completion of all fieldwork the contents of the finds archive will be reviewed by the museum and, if they are considered worthy of retention, then they will be transferred to the museum under the allocated accession number with the agreement of the landowner. As part of the overall commitment to archive costs, the Client, through AC archaeology, will cover the costs of all museum storage boxes. Material not retained by the museum or the landowner will be discarded three months from acceptance of the final report.
- 5.4** If the fieldwork does not expose deposits of archaeological interest and yield little or no artefactual material, then no archive will be prepared or deposited. The results of the fieldwork will be held by the Historic Environment Record in the form of the final report and the creation of an OASIS entry and uploading of the report.
- 5.5** Subject to appropriate acknowledgement, the archive may be copied or *bona fide* research or in relation to local authority development control activities without infringement of copyright or the need for permission from the originator.

6. REPORTING

- 6.1** An illustrated summary report will be prepared within six weeks of finishing on site. The contents of this document will vary depending on the findings, but would normally contain:
- A non-technical summary;
 - A description of the investigation methodology;
 - A description of results including an assessment of any artefact or palaeoenvironmental analysis undertaken;
 - A plan showing the location of trenches;
 - Relevant plans, sections and photographs;
 - A comment on the archaeological importance of the results, with reference to other published archaeological research from the area;
 - A completed OASIS form; and,
 - An assessment of potential of the finds and archive for further analysis.
- 6.2** Should any finds or samples be recovered during the investigations then, the AC archaeology Finds Manager will make a decision, in consultation with the WCACA, on the level of reporting initially required (Level 1-2), based on the Chartered Institute online guidance Toolkit for Specialist Reporting. The following specialists will contribute to report as necessary and provide recommendations on what and whether further analysis will be undertaken:
- An assessment of any prehistoric ceramics will be provided by Imogen Wood PhD;
 - Other ceramics will be assessed by Naomi Payne BA MA PhD MCIfA, Finds Manager, AC archaeology, or other regional specialist as required;

- Land snail analysis, environmental, geoarchaeological and radiocarbon sampling will be carried out by Mike Allen PhD MCIfA FLS FSA;
- Pollen analysis will be carried out by Rob Scaife BSc PhD FRGS;
- General plant macrofossils will be reported by John Georgi MSc;
- Charcoal will be reported by Dana Challanor MSc, PhD;
- Reporting on worked flint will be carried out by Peter Bellamy BSc, MCIfA
- An assessment of any human remains will be carried out by Charlotte Coles BSc MSc MCIfA;
- An assessment of animal bone will be reported on by Charlotte Coles BSc MSc MCIfA;
- An assessment of metal objects will be undertaken by Naomi Payne BA MA PhD MCIfA; and,
- Coins will be identified by Naomi Payne BA MA PhD MCIfA.

Other finds or environmental reports will be prepared by appropriate specialists or in-house staff as required.

- 6.3** The report will be submitted in digital (.pdf) format to the WCACA and a hard copy of the finalised report sent to the Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record. Copies will be produced for distribution to the Client and the Local Planning Authority as required.
- 6.4** Details of the project will be submitted to the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological investigations). The OASIS number for this project is **541298**.
- 6.5** In the event that significant remains are recorded then, in line with government planning guidance, WCACA may require publication of the results in conjunction with any further archaeological work carried out on the site. If such remains are encountered, the publication requirements, including any further analysis that may be necessary, will be confirmed by WCACA.

7. HEALTH & SAFETY

- 7.1** Archaeological staff will operate under AC archaeology's Health and Safety Policy and any other additional requirements set out by main site contractor. All works will also be carried out in accordance with current Health and Safety legislation, to include (but not exclusively rely upon) the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015.
- 7.2** In accordance with the provisions of the AC archaeology Health and Safety Policy, the AC archaeology site representative will be responsible for ensuring that operations under their control are carried out in accordance with the procedures outlined in 7.1 and in the site-specific risk assessment.
- 7.3** Archaeological staff will not work in unsafe or unhealthy conditions, even where not to do so will result in the possible under-recording of the archaeological resource. Safety helmets, high visibility vests and boots are to be used by all site personnel as necessary. Archaeological staff must not enter any area where there is a considered to be a health and safety risk that has not or is not being appropriately mitigated against.

- 7.4 Senior members of staff have up to date first aid qualifications. AC archaeology is registered as an approved contractor under the Worksafe Health and Safety Scheme (SMAS), as recognised by SSIP (Safety Schemes in Procurement).
- 7.5 The Project Manager responsible for Health and Safety for AC archaeology is Laurence Vinnels. Laurence is accredited under the Site Manager's Safety Training Scheme (SMSTS).
- 7.6 AC archaeology carries Public Liability Insurance cover to £5,000,000, Employers Liability to £10,000,000 and Professional Indemnity cover to £5,000,000.

8. PERSONNEL AND PROGRAMME

- 8.1 The project will be coordinated by Simon Hughes, Director for AC archaeology. Other personnel will be permanent and contract staff members of AC archaeology, all with suitable experience of this type of investigation and adhering to the ClfA *Code of Conduct*. The attending archaeologist will familiarise themselves with the content of this method statement prior to commencing the work.
- 8.2 The archaeological trench evaluation is anticipated to commence during March 2026.
- 8.3 The project will be monitored by the WCACA for the local planning authority. Any variations to this document shall be agreed with them before they are carried out.

9. COPYRIGHT

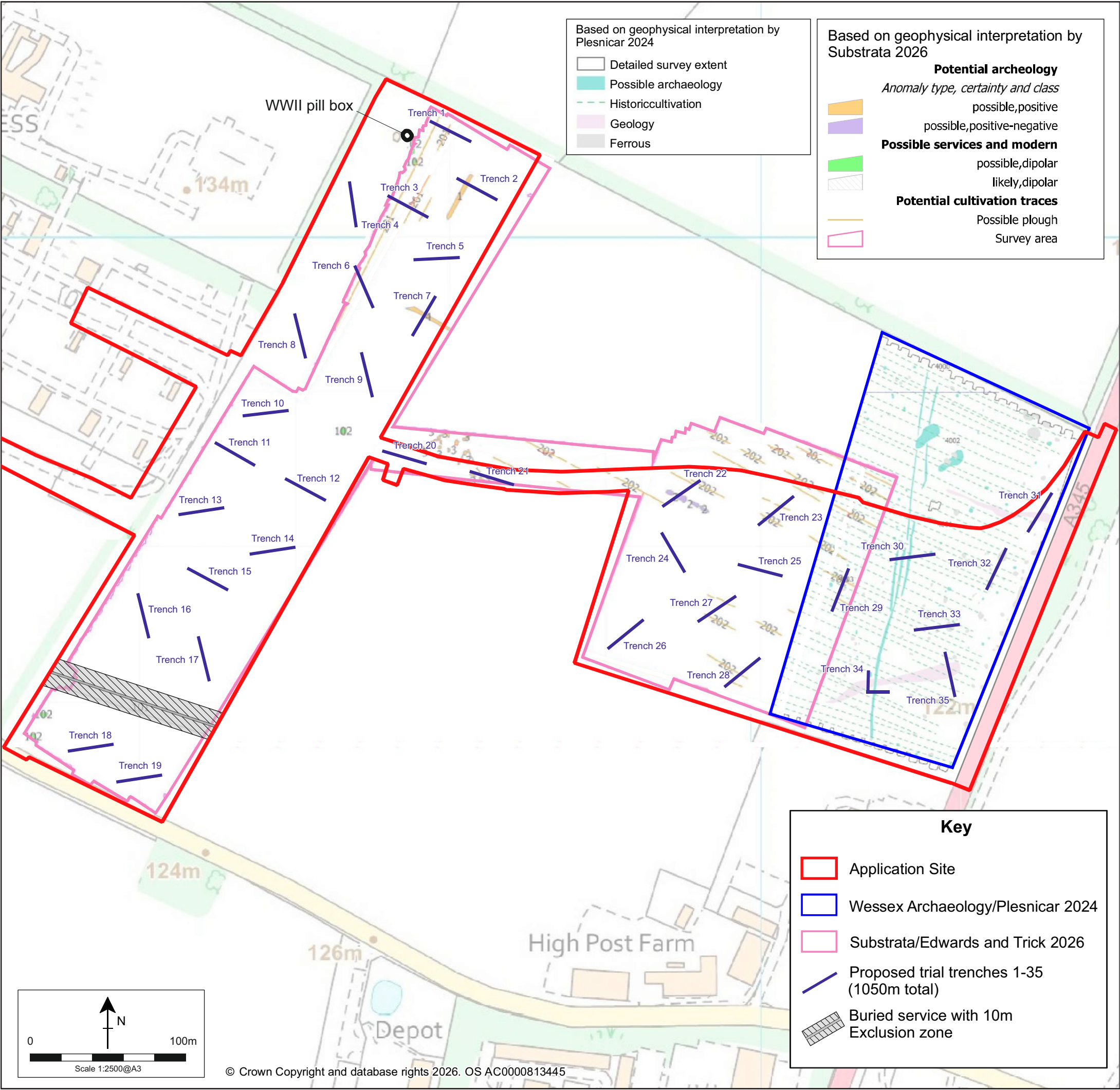
- 9.1 AC archaeology Ltd shall retain full copyright of any report under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the Client for the use of the report by the Client in all matters directly relating to the project. Any document produced to meet planning requirements may be freely copied for planning, development control, education and research purposes without recourse to the Copyright owner subject to all due and appropriate acknowledgements being provided.

10. SOURCES CONSULTED

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