

Archaeological Evaluation: Guidance Document April 2024

1. SUMMARY:

- 1.1 This generic advice note provides the outline framework on which a detailed written scheme of investigation (WSI) should be based. This WSI must be agreed with County Archaeological Services in advance of any work being undertaken. This document outlines general good practice and requirements pertaining to all archaeological evaluation projects carried out in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 An archaeological field evaluation has been requested due to the potential presence of archaeological features within the application area. The evaluation phase will need to consist of a geophysical survey and a trenched evaluation. This design brief outlines our requirements for the evaluation and a written scheme of investigation setting out how the contracting unit will meet these requirements will need to be agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) in advance of the work commencing. Oxfordshire County Council aim to respond to such WSIs within 21 working days.
- 1.3 The evaluation will aim to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character and date of any archaeological deposits within the area affected by invasive development. This evidence will form the evidence base on which the significance of any archaeological deposits on the site can be assessed and described and the potential impact of the proposed development on this significance can be appropriately assessed in line with the NPPF, paragraph 194.

The evaluation will include any post-excavation work and publication requirements resulting from it and should aim to define any research priorities that may be relevant should further investigation be required.

- 1.4 Where the written scheme of investigation is not produced by the company undertaking the fieldwork then a further specification from the archaeological contractor will need to be agreed in advance of the work being undertaken.

2. BACKGROUND:

2.1 Site Location and Description

- 2.1.1 The planning and geographical background can be set out in a site-specific brief upon request. There is no charge for this brief and for planning related work applicants are advised to contact us to request a site-specific brief.

2.3 Archaeological Background

- 2.3.1 The WSI will need to set out the archaeological background to the project. Where a project has had an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) produced, in line with an agreed written specification, then this will form the basis of the archaeological background. Where a DBA has not been undertaken then the background will need to be based on data obtained from the Historic Environment Record. There is a charge for this data.

3. REQUIREMENT FOR WORK:

- 3.1 This field evaluation has been required in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) because of the presence of known sites of archaeological interest within the immediate vicinity of the development. The evaluation should aim to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within those areas affected in order to provide sufficient data to allow their significance to be understood.
- 3.2 The evaluation should aim to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within those areas affected. The evaluation report produced will present a digest of information on the character and significance of the deposits under review and this report will form the basis of any proposals for appropriate further action.
- 3.3 This field evaluation has been required in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) because of the presence of known sites of archaeological interest within the immediate vicinity of the development. The evaluation should aim to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within those areas affected in order to provide sufficient data to allow their significance to be understood.

4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS EVALUATION:

- 4.1 A geophysical survey will need to be undertaken across the development site. The methodology for the geophysical survey can be found in the Geophysical Survey Annex to this document. The field evaluation phase of this staged programme will require a series of evaluation trenches, typically 30m long by 1.8m wide to be excavated in the area of proposed development. The actual number of trenches will depend on the nature of the development and the archaeological interest/potential of the site and will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services in advance of the production of a WSI.

The evaluation will however typically need to consist of a 4% sample of the red line area.

Whilst this brief sets out the archaeological investigation required to meet the planning condition it will be the archaeological contractor's responsibility to ensure that any works are undertaken in line with the site health and safety requirements.

- 4.2 Provision should be made for taking environmental/organic samples where appropriate. An environmental sampling strategy will need to be agreed between the environmental specialist and OCAS once the fieldwork is underway. The method statement should include a trench location plan.
- 4.3 The excavation under the supervision of a competent archaeologist is to be taken down to the top of 'natural' or the top of any significant archaeological level, whichever is the higher. While the surface of the exposed archaeological horizon

should be cleaned for the purpose of clarifying the remains, archaeological features should generally only be sampled sufficiently to characterise and date them. Full excavation of features should not be undertaken at this stage, but the evaluation will need to investigate sufficient features to enable their date, nature, extent and condition to be described. The evaluation will be expected to investigate a range of features within each trench. Care should be taken not to damage archaeological deposits through excessive use of mechanical excavation.

- 4.4 The WSI should state that any changes to the agreed methodology will need to be agreed with OCAS.

The trenches should not be backfilled until after they have been monitored in line with the supporting annexes.

Geophysical Annex

PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION:

1. The project shall be under the control of a qualified archaeologist who should preferably be a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. A written scheme of investigation must be agreed with County Archaeological Services in advance of the fieldwork being undertaken and sufficient time to facilitate this must be provided.

2 Geophysical Survey

- 2.1 The geophysical survey will need to be undertaken over the area that will be disturbed by the development, including any areas of flood compensation, tree planting or any other proposals that will involve below ground disturbance. The survey will typically consist of a magnetometry survey but the choice of technique to be used will be determined by the geophysical contractor taking into account the soil type, geology, current ground conditions and use and any other relevant factors that may affect the effectiveness of the results. The WSI will need to set out clearly the justification of the choice of survey.

3 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS:

Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services will monitor progress and standards throughout the field survey phase of the project. To facilitate this, the specification should include a projected timetable on site and the County Archaeological Officer, or his representative(s) shall be notified of the start date of the survey.

4 REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION:

- 4.1. For most survey projects the preparation of the report should be relatively simple following on directly from the desk-based study and/or fieldwork and achieved within a standard format. Details of styles and format are to be determined by the Unit. In any event, the report should include as a minimum.
 - a) The report is to contain information on the topography geology, soils and known archaeology of the site. Where any of this is not known it must be explicitly stated as this may affect the certainty of the interpretation.
 - b) The report should include a non-technical summary with sufficient information to allow the interested reader to gain an idea of the scope of the work and general success, or otherwise, of locating archaeological remains.
 - c) A statement of the objectives and methods of the study.
 - d) Clear interpretation diagrams must also be provided. These should be clear, separate diagrams that can be understood by a non-technical reader. Interpretations drawn on top of data diagrams are not adequate.
 - e) While it is the responsibility of the geophysicist to display the data in a format that illustrates their final interpretation, the effects of each process step should be documented and displayed. Displays of the raw data should be provided

together with modified data after each smoothing or filtering algorithm. In general as little processing as possible should be undertaken.

- f) At least one plot of the raw data should be included, normally in the form of an X-Y trace or a grey scale image, in order that a geophysicist can make an independent assessment of the results. If the survey does not produce appropriate X-Y trace plots or raw data, such as may be the case with multi array systems, then the reasons why this cannot be included should be clearly set out within the WSI.
- g) All data and interpretation diagrams should be reproduced at an appropriate scale from which exact measurements can be taken (normally 1:1000 preferred minimum).

Identification of areas of known and possible archaeological or historic landscape interest, together with brief justification of such identification.

- h) The anticipated degree of survival of any archaeological site or area so identified.
- i) A comprehensive bibliography of sources of information consulted, including those with no useful information.
- j) Consideration of the evidence assembled within a wider landscape setting.
- k) A critical review of the effectiveness of the methodology employed.
- l) The basic computerised data is to be regarded as part of the site archive. The digital archive should be deposited with the ADS.

4.2. A **draft copy** of the summary report (either in pdf or .doc format) shall be supplied to the office of the County Archaeological Officer; for verification and assessment by the CAO or his representative. This will need to be provided before a final copy is produced or submitted with any planning application.

4.3 When the report has been agreed a final digital copy will then be supplied to the County Historic Environment Record (HER) at archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk on the understanding that it will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months). GIS files (shape and geo-rectified Tiff files) of the interpretation and greyscale images should be provided to the office of the County Archaeological Officer.

4.4. All archaeological organisations should ensure that an abstract containing the essential elements of the results precedes the main body of the report.

4.5. Publication of significant results should be pursued and should take place within a reasonable length of time (normally not more than five years after completion of the work). Style and format to be determined by the archaeological organisation, with regard to agreed standards of archaeological publication, and the house style of the appropriate local, regional or national publication. In a phased programme of work, assessment results will normally be incorporated into the final publication. It is

recommended that all results should be published, even if limited to one-line reports in a local journal on work done with negative results.

- 4.6 The report should state the location of the archive and acknowledge the curatorial role played in the project by Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services. It should also acknowledge any provision of information from the County Historic Environment Record which is copyright of Oxfordshire County Council.

Evaluation Annex

1. PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION - FIELD EVALUATION

- 1.1 The project shall be under the control of a suitably qualified archaeologist who should preferably be a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). The evaluation should be undertaken in accordance with the CIfA's Standard and Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation, 2023.

[CIfA Code, regulations and standards & guidance | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists](#)

- 1.2 The WSI will need to include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds and advise, or report on, other aspects of the investigation. An agreed allowance should be made for their fees. The WSI should also state that where additional specialists are used then these will need to be agreed with County Archaeological Services.
- 1.3 The whole range of investigative/recording techniques should be considered. These should be presented and, if discounted, a supporting statement should provide an explanation.
- 1.4 A plan at an appropriate scale showing the proposed location and extent of survey works/trenches/test pits etc. should be supplied. An indication of whether trenches will be machine or hand dug should be given.
- 1.5 When machine-opened trial trenches are employed:
- a) An appropriate machine must be used, with an appropriate bucket, usually a wide toothless ditching blade. Toothed buckets should not be used without agreement of OCAS. Choice should be influenced by prevailing site conditions, and the machine must be able to carry out a clean job.
 - b) All machine work must be carried out under the direct supervision of an archaeologist.
 - c) All topsoil or recent overburden must be removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon in successive level spits. The continued use of machinery beyond this point should only take place when specifically agreed with OCAS as necessary for the particular type of evaluation.
 - d) The top of the first significant archaeological horizon may be cleared by the machine, but must then be cleaned by hand and inspected for features.
- 1.6 Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits identified must be excavated by hand through a specified or agreed sampling procedure to enable their date, nature, extent and condition to be described. No archaeological deposits should be entirely removed unless this is unavoidable. It is not necessarily expected that all trial trenches will be fully excavated to natural subsoil, but the depth of archaeological deposits across the whole site must be assessed. The evaluation will be expected to investigate a range of features within each trench. The stratigraphy of all trial trenches should be recorded even where no archaeological deposits have

been identified. Spoil heaps shall be monitored to allow analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts. Metal detectors should be used to recover metal finds from the spoil.

- 1.7 All excavation, either by machine and by hand, must be undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features or deposits, which appear to be worthy of preservation in situ.
- 1.8 Any human remains, which are encountered, must initially be left in situ. If removal is necessary this must comply with relevant Ministry of Justice licence regulations. OCAS will need to be informed of any human remains encountered.
- 1.9 The data collection strategy should be part of a structured academic research agenda based on local and national research priorities. Data management, recovery and recording levels should be clearly defined and should be appropriate to the particular stratified deposits under investigation.
- 1.10 This Selection Strategy and Data Management Plan should be specifically set out in the written scheme of investigation.

2 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS:

- 2.1 Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services will monitor progress and standards throughout the project. To facilitate this, the project design should include a projected timetable on site (indicating staff grades, members and machine hire time if appropriate etc).
- 2.2 OCAS shall be notified of the official start date at least 2 weeks **prior to the commencement of work**, following the agreement of a written scheme of investigation, in order to arrange a date for monitoring visits. A number of site visits may be required.

No trenches should be backfilled until they have been signed off by County Archaeological Services.

- 2.3 A charge of £290 will be made per monitoring visit. This will be charged to the archaeological consultant who arranged the site meeting. If the archaeological consultant or contractor's client wishes to pay this monitoring fee directly, they will need to contact us in advance of the site visit. A purchase order to this amount will need to be provided in advance of the agreement of any site visits and there may be an additional fee to cover the cost of adding them to our invoice system.

3. POST EXCAVATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

- 3.1 The post excavation work should include the processing and primary research, analysis and investigative conservation necessary to prepare the site archive for preservation in a usable form and to produce a full report for publication. Incorporate provision for the long-term storage of both finds and site archive with the County Museums Service. On completion of the fieldwork the site archive will be

prepared in the format agreed with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service, who should be consulted at this stage concerning their requirements.

3.2 For most evaluation projects the preparation of the report should be relatively simple following on directly from the fieldwork and achieved within a standard format. Details of styles and format are to be determined by the Unit. In any event, the report should include as a minimum:

- a) a plan(s), at an appropriate scale, showing trench layout (as dug) and features located. A sample of trench photographs and representative trench sections should be included. Plans should include sufficient grid references to allow them to be geo-rectified,
- b) a table summarising any descriptive text showing, per trench, the features, classes and numbers of artefacts located and their interpretation,
- c) a reconsideration of the methodology used, i.e. a confidence rating,
- d) a plan, at an appropriate scale, showing both actual and, where possible, predicted archaeological deposits, and section drawings of excavated features. Representative sections of trench stratigraphy, including any blank trenches, will need to be included in the report along with a selection of trench photographs
- e) a consideration of the archaeological evidence from within the site set in its broader landscape setting.
- f) specialist reports on finds and environmental samples.
- g) The report **should not** give an opinion on whether preservation or investigation is considered appropriate. (However, the client may wish to commission separately a Unit's opinion on an appropriate treatment of the archaeological resource.)

3.3 For more extensive and complicated evaluation projects, especially where they are part of large-scale programmes of work in historic urban centres, the procedures outlined in English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) should be followed for immediate post-field archive preparation and initial assessment. Agreement should then be reached, in collaboration with the OCAS, about what aspects need to be taken forward to provide a report in the required format containing the information needed for planning purposes.

4. ARCHIVE DEPOSITION:

4.1 The archive should be prepared to the minimum acceptable standard defined in MoRPHE. The integrity of the archive should be maintained.

4.2 The contracted archaeological organisation will endeavour to ensure that the full integrated site archive including all finds shall, with the agreement of the owners, be deposited after completion of post-excavation work with the County Museums Service (Oxfordshire Museums) unless another repository is indicated. A transfer of

Title form must be signed by the land owner and the report should clearly indicate whether or not this has been done.

Where such a transfer of title has not been agreed then this may affect the acceptance of the report and the discharge of any planning conditions.

- 4.3 If, during the course of excavation, items are found that may be potentially defined as 'Treasure' under the Code of Practice of the Treasure Act 1996, the archaeological contractor will be responsible for ensuring that the County Coroner is informed. OCAS and the Finds Liaison Officer will also need to be informed of any possible treasure finds.
- 4.4 Oxfordshire Museums requires that deposited archives from developer-led archaeological work shall be accompanied by funding as outlined in the Transfer. Archaeological organisations shall therefore include an estimate of the costs of deposition for this project in their tender. The estimated cost will be clearly shown and shall be calculated in accordance with the procedures set out in 'Requirements for Transferring Archaeological Archives 2023 - 2024.
- 4.5 The contracted archaeological organisation will be responsible for ensuring that all digital data generated by the excavation is archived with the [Archaeological Data Service](#) (ADS) and an [OASIS](#) record ([Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS](#)) created.
- 4.6 In the event of the legal owner(s) resolving to retain all or part of the site archive, they shall be responsible for the future preservation and maintenance of any material element of that archive. That part of the site archive in question, shall be transferred to the legal owner only after; all necessary processing, research, analysis and investigative/stabilising conservation and correct packing necessary to prepare the archive for preservation and storage in a usable, accessible form, and to produce a full report for publication, has been completed. The owner shall ensure that all necessary provision is made for the long-term preservation of the archive in a satisfactory environment, and that it is accessible for future research. The contracted archaeological organisation will ensure that a proper record of material kept by the landowner shall be included in the written archive, and the location and ownership of the material shall be stated in the written archive and public record. The explicit (written) permission of the owner shall be obtained for the latter in order that the *Data Protection Act 1984* is not contravened.
- 4.7 Details of archive deposition shall be submitted to the County HER.
- 4.8 The County Museums Service shall be notified of the fieldwork and an accession number obtained within one month of the commencement of fieldwork and should be informed of the expected time limits for deposition of the archive.
- 4.9 The accession number should be included in the draft fieldwork reports.

5. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION:

- 5.1 A draft digital copy of the evaluation report (either in pdf or .doc format) shall be supplied to the office of the County Archaeological Officer for verification and assessment by the CAO or his representative prior to a final copy being produced

or submitted for planning purposes; when the report has been agreed a final digital copy will then be supplied to the County Historic Environment Record (HER) at archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk on the understanding that it will become a public document after an appropriate period of time (generally not exceeding six months). Details of archive deposition shall be submitted to the County HER.

GIS (shape) files of the final phased excavated trench plan should be provided to the office of the County Archaeological Officer.

- 5.2 All archaeological organisations should ensure that an abstract containing the essential elements of the results precedes the main body of the report.
- 5.3 Publication of significant results should be pursued, and should take place within a reasonable length of time (normally not more than five years after completion of the work). Style and format to be determined by the archaeological organisation, with regard to agreed standards of archaeological publication, and the house style of the appropriate local, regional or national publication. In a phased programme of work, assessment results will normally be incorporated into the final publication. It is recommended that all results should be published, even if limited to one-line reports in a local journal on work done with negative results.
- 5.4 The report should state the location of the archive, state whether a transfer of title has been signed and acknowledge the curatorial role played in the project by Oxfordshire County Council Archaeological Services. It should also acknowledge any provision of information from the County Historic Environment Record, which is copyright of Oxfordshire County Council. Any secondary reports or articles generated by this project shall similarly acknowledge County Archaeological Services and the HER.
- 5.5 With regard to publication; the level of the report should take into account the scale of the project, the overall importance of the site based on Historic England guidance, and its status within local and regional research strategies. It should also be commensurate with the level of results obtained.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL Contacts

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES CONTACTS: DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Email: archaeologydc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Lead Archaeologist: Richard Oram

Tel: 07917001026

Email: Richard.oram@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters for West Oxfordshire and OCC.

Planning Archaeologist: Steven Weaver

Tel: 07526972981

Email: steven.weaver@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters for South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse.

Planning Archaeologist: **Victoria Green**

Tel: 07922848811

Email: victoria.green@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for archaeological planning matters for Cherwell.

(All other dealings with national and regional bodies/utility Companies are shared on a District basis).

County Historic Environment Record

Email: archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk

County Historic Environment Record Officer: Jacqueline Pitt

Tel: 07741607816

Email: archaeology@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for management, development and access to the HER.

Archaeologist: Robbie Luxford

Tel: 07785453287

Email: Robbie.Luxford@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsible for assisting the HER and DC Officers and invoice issues.

COUNTY MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE STORE

Witney Road, Standlake, Oxon OX8 7QG

Archaeological Curator: Angie Bolton - Angie.Bolton@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

01865 300557

Conservation Laboratory:

01865 300937

Finds Liaison Officer:-

edward.caswell@oxfordshire.gov.uk

01865 300557

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Charging policy.

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (OCAS) has a varied and demanding caseload and in order to deal efficiently with these demands operates a policy of aiming to respond to all consultations within 21 working days. We also specify that we need to be contacted about site visits at least 10 working days in advance as our diaries are often fully booked within this period.

We do recognise however that there are some occasions outside of our control where circumstances mean that this can cause delays to developments. As such we have agreed a set of charges for a priority DC service to deal with exceptional circumstances.

There will be no charge for agreeing reports and WSIs within our standard 21 working day timeframe.

The priority service will be provided subject to availability and will need to be agreed with OCAS either direct with the relevant case office or by emailing

Archaeologydc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The new priority DC charges are as follows,

Type	Standard Timeframe	Standard Charge £	Priority offered	Charge £ (up to)	notes
Monitoring Visit	10 days	290	within 5 days	1200 (a)	
Agreement of WSI	21 days	free	within 3 days	800 (b)	
Reviewing wb report	21 days	free	within 3 days	800 (c)	
reviewing small eval report	21 days	free	within 3 days	400	1-50 houses
reviewing medium eval report	21 days	free	within 3 days	700	50-200
reviewing large eval report	21 days	free	within 3-5 days	2700	200+
Post excavation assessments	21 days (+ for larger sites)	free	within 5 days	3600	need to be by arrangement

a, For monitoring visits this would depend on the notice period given.

1 day	£1200
2 days	£1000
3 days	£900
4 days	£800
5 days	£700
5-10 days	£500

- b, will depend on the nature of the WSI, simple (Geophysical survey, desk-based assessments and small fieldwork projects such as watching briefs, when based on a brief) - £300, medium (small evaluations and excavations where based on a brief) – (£500) and complex (large projects, overarching schemes and WSIs not based on a brief) - £800.

- c, will depend on the size of the report, small (up to a single house) - £300, medium (up to 5 houses) – (£500) and large (complex or large projects such as linear schemes) - £800.